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'Love's Labours': Extreme Metal Music and its Feeling Community

By

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I declare that the contents of this thesis are my own work and that no material contained in this thesis has been submitted for a degree at another university.

The papers listed below have been presented during the period of study for this PhD:

N. F. Tovey 'Insider Research: Problems and Dilemmas' at Work in Progress: Research Spaces, Research Journeys, University of Warwick, 1st December 2007.

N. F. Allett "As soon as that track starts I feel…" Unravelling Attachments to Extreme Metal Music with 'Music Elicitation' at New Methodological Challenges for Youth Research, University of Southampton, 12th June 2009.

Abstract

"Love's Labours': Extreme Metal Music, and its Feeling Community'
proposes an understanding of the nature of subcultural investments in music. It
explores the distinct character of Extreme Metal music and the subcultural
world that surrounds its fandom. In particular, it is concerned with the nature of
attachments to and investments in subculture, investigating how fans feel part
of a community, how identities are positioned and postured as 'Extreme
Metal', and what processes and activities construct such identifications.
Through qualitative research of a group of Extreme Metal fans, and drawing on
a variety of theoretical concepts; it suggests that subcultural identities may be
related to the processes of interaction and performance and the distinctive
forms of subcultural habitus and expert labours linked to those activities. It
further suggests that the fan/music relationship can be considered as a site of
deep knowledges of 'self', performative labours and interpersonal relations in
ways significantly more nuanced than previously theorised. It points to
'feeling' as a key feature of music fandom that provides the explanatory drive
to take on, and embed oneself in, particular subcultural habitus, performances
and kinship and thus subculture. It proposes that music subcultures can be
understood as 'performative feeling communities' that anchor and forge forms
of distinction.

<u>Introduction</u>

> *Ben:*   *It [Weakling's 'Dead as Dreams'[1]] is one of the most*
>
>   *devastatingly sad pieces of music I have ever heard. It*
>
>   *gives me a really physical reaction. I can feel my*
>
>   *stomach sinking as the track starts and there is a real*
>
>   *tense build up at the beginning. Where there's just*
>
>   *feedback and then it breaks open, and I just feel…I don't*
>
>   *really feel sad, because I am not sad about anything, but*
>
>   *I just feel totally physically and mentally devastated. As*
>
>   *it goes on, I get a kinda feeling of power out of it [...]*
>
>   *like where it kicks in with the kind of martial drum beat,*
>
>   *I thought that it feels like it's gradually lifting out, and*
>
>   *lifting out, and then eventually the riff[2] changes and*
>
>   *once again the mood of the piece changes. I think this is*
>
>   *really epic. It is very widescreen.*

<u>Thesis Summary</u>

This study does not aim to make universal claims about Extreme Metal fans; rather it asks questions about the ways in which people become embedded in a subcultural identity and community. Through qualitative research with Extreme Metal fans, this thesis examines collective identification and music's distinct qualities that inform fandom. It questions what is involved in

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[1] *Weakling* is an atmospheric Black Metal band.
[2] A 'riff' is a sequence of guitar chords that creates 'melody'.

becoming, investing in, performing and being an Extreme Metal fan and what the distinct attachments and reasons to become embedded in a subcultural identity are. In addition, it attempts to explore the character of Extreme Metal music and how it relates to the social and cultural relations surrounding it. The thesis attempts to uncover the many dimensions of fan/subcultural attachments and commitments by employing a range of qualitative research methods with a group of Extreme Metal fans/subcultural participants. It uses semi-structured interviews, memory work, media elicitation and music elicitation within a research group context in order to create an arena in which to observe fan performances and interactions and to uncover their values, investments, attachments and feelings. By drawing upon a variety of theoretical concepts including Bourdieu's (1984) notions of habitus and distinction, Bakhtin's (1981; 1986) notions of 'speech' community, and Brennan's (2003) 'structures of feeling', this thesis considers Extreme Metal fans' subcultural habitus, distinctions and expert labours and the interaction of fans in creating that world via their etiquettes, repertoires and performances. It further attempts to explain Extreme Metal subculture behaviours via my participants' affective attachments and Extreme Metals' 'feeling structures'.

'Music is my Life': A Personal Rationale

I grew up listening to 1970s Heavy Metal and psychedelic hard rock by default, due to my father's music taste. I was always surrounded by this music; it was part of everyday life: during family celebrations, being a passenger in my father's car, and it was certainly the weekend soundtrack. It is little wonder

then that both of my brothers and myself also adopted a taste for Metal over

time (although most of the time not to our father's taste). At thirteen, I heard

the bass tones and frantic tempo of Thrash Metal through the wall of my

bedroom, from my older brother's room. Although the vocals and melody were

barely audible, it still sounded powerful and driving, it captured my attention.

My fandom of Metal began at first covertly. I 'borrowed' my brother's Metal

CDs without permission, trying to return them before their disappearance was

noticed. I soon, however, began to identify myself as a fan of 'Metal',

befriending other Metal fans and performing an alternative version of 'girl' at

school. When I was 14, I started learning bass guitar, so that I could join a

Metal band. Being in a band gave me the opportunity to make older friends,

stay out late, dabble in narcotics, and feel like an 'adult'. This also led to

frequenting a small pub and a live music club in the English Midlands town

where I lived. These venues were where the youth came together in their

shared love of Heavy Metal and Hard Rock in all its forms and it was also in

this environment where I later met my partner, who shared my music taste.

Music, in particular 'Metal', at this young age permeated every aspect of my

life, my friends and relationships, my style, and indeed my outlook on life.

When I was 18, my friend at my school's sixth form leant me a CD of the band

'Emperor'. When I listened to the CD I had borrowed I was stunned by the

harsh uncomfortable rhythm, dark soundscapes and strangled vocals, I had an

aversion to the strangeness but also attraction to the 'epic' and 'grand' scale

and content of the music. I had just experienced 'Black Metal'. I had heard

Extreme Metal before, I already enjoyed 80s Thrash bands such as 'Slayer' and English Doom Metal bands such as 'My Dying Bride', but Black Metal had something more vehement, aggressive and dark at its core. I began to actively seek out this music. I began to attend Extreme Metal gigs, as many as I could afford (which also involved a great deal of travelling across the country), and soon this became a regular and familiar occurrence. Over time, I became submerged into Extreme Metal subculture, adopting its dress, and having a sense of hierarchy and authenticity. Extreme Metal continues to be a central characteristic of my everyday experience. It is my daily soundtrack; it is at the heart of my life.

When I think about the events of my life, I also often think of the music that surrounded me at the time. Music has always been present in the background, often in the foreground, a key element of my life experience that has shaped me. My experience of music as a teenager could be related to a desire to identify; but my later experiences, particularly in relation to Extreme Metal, seemed linked to the feelings that I found through the music and a desire to experience an 'extreme' of music. When I narrate how I became a fan of Metal and then of Extreme Metal, I do so through my biography; attempting to create a sense of coherence to my identifications. The reason for my connection to music and my desire to make Extreme Metal the daily soundtrack to my life is largely unspoken, and something that I find difficult to unravel.

This study has its roots in my own reflections on my activities and long-term participation in the Extreme Metal subculture. When I contemplate my involvement in the Extreme Metal subculture, I am faced with many questions linked to my identity. How did I become this identity? What was it about the music and the culture surrounding it that both drew me to it and led me to adopt an Extreme Metal fan identity? Why remain committed to it? Over this past decade, I have also been subjected to consistent questioning by acquaintances and colleagues about why I choose to dress in the subcultural style that I do, and why I choose to identify myself in relation to my music taste. I have always found my answers difficult to form and, on embarking on this project, I began a period of self-reflection by questioning my motives, my actions, and my subcultural participation. Music has always been a significant part of my life, I feel that the music I love 'speaks' to me and shows me something of myself and Extreme Metal, in particular, gives me physical and emotional feeling, a connection which I am passionate about. It was not until I really thought about this answer that it became clear that a key reason for my identification and investment in Extreme Metal was related to my feelings and that, maybe, a consideration of feeling would reveal something more of the fan relationship with music. In this thesis, I focus upon the processes of becoming and identifying as an Extreme Metal fan and consider the place that 'feelings' have in music fandom and music subculture. I also place myself within the research, involving myself in disclosure and acknowledgements of my investments which have, until now, been concealed.

Subcultures, Music, and Metal: Theoretical Contributions and Rationale

This thesis is of interest epistemically to the disciplines of sociology, media studies, cultural studies and music studies for several reasons that I now address and which relate to my focus and my theoretical approach. In particular, the thesis contributes to the fields of Metal studies, subcultures, fandom and music studies.

As I have already described, my focus is influenced by my reflections of my own experience of Extreme Metal fandom. The decision to focus upon Extreme Metal was also fuelled by my recognition of the lack of studies on the subcultural nature of Metal. Studies on the Metal genres, in particular Heavy Metal, have largely focused upon its gendered nature and the alienation of its fans. For instance, Arnett's (1993; 1996) studies of 'Metalheads' portray the Heavy Metal fan as male and adolescent who is either alienated or thrill seeking. Whereas Punks have often been portrayed as culturally significant, and their style as symbolically resistant; Metal fans are portrayed as taking part in natural youthful rebellion (Weinstein, 2000). Throughout the course of work, there has been growth in the field of Metal studies with research that considers the subcultural elements and gives the genres serious academic treatment. A key study to have emerged is Kahn-Harris' (2007) research on the global Extreme Metal scene. The study introduces topics that my thesis continues, particularly the 'extremity' of Extreme Metal, and the subcultural capitals that form notions of scene/subcultural hierarchies. This study is not concerned with the character of the global Extreme Metal scene, but rather how

fans identify as members of Extreme Metal culture and what rituals come into play to transmit those identifications.

Music culture is often associated with youth consumers. A focus on youth, since the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) approach to subculture, has meant that research on older music culture participants has been largely absent. An emphasis upon youth bears little resemblance to the varying age of music consumers, and of participants in music cultures. For instance, Bennett (2006) has considered the continued participation of older punk fans and Vroomen (2002) has highlighted the fan-practices of adult Kate Bush fans. Extreme Metal subcultural participation is not specific to youth and this study is not a youth study. It considers a group of adult participants in the Extreme Metal subculture.

This study contributes to the evolving and ongoing discussion surrounding 'post-subculture' and the most suitable ways in which to theorize collective music affiliation. The recent movement away from the terminology of 'subculture' and the emergence of terms, particularly surrounding post-subculture, have rejected the idea of fixed identity and boundaries (Weinzierl and Muggleton, 2003). Much music fandom, however, takes a collective form that has its own distinctive notions of authenticity, and investment and commitment to a shared cultural world (Hodkinson, 2002; Haenfler, 2004; MacRae, 2004). Subculture is not only defined through the spectacular but through the interactions and everyday activities of its members: the relational

nature of subcultural identities. Rather than stable subcultural identity, one can consider the interactions, activities and performances that help create (and indeed sustain) the cultural world and the collective identity for the subcultural member. Instead of a merely playful relationship to music and the culture which surrounds it, music may also be located as a site for deep knowledges and 'feeling', which may help to explain the ongoing attachments to and investments in music subculture.

To this end, this thesis addresses the invisibility of the music relationship in studies of music culture and music fandom. As I will go on to suggest in Chapter 2, previous research into music cultures (in particular the subcultural studies of the Birmingham Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies) has given little attention to the place music has in attachments to music subculture. In addition, studies of music fandom have largely focused upon the celebrity or the lyrical/visual content of music and music video rather than the music genre itself. I am therefore interested in the distinct relationship people have with music. This study therefore offers a musicological contribution to music culture research. A focus on music itself brings the auditory into the fields of subculture and fandom research, in which the focus has almost exclusively been on the interpersonal/social relations, and spectacular practices. Moreover, a consideration of the musicological dimensions of music cultures brings cultural considerations into the field of musicology.

This study shifts the focus of subcultural and fandom studies through its consideration of the fan/subculturalist's attachment to music that can be related to affect and feeling. I consider that the relationship between music and feeling is distinct, and hence influences the nature of the cultures surrounding its consumption. Collective feeling can be related to Maffesoli's (1996) 'feeling community' an outcome of what he claims is a late-modern shift towards neo-tribalism in which we seek short-lived collective attachments in order to experience affective relationships. Rather than short-lived and fleeting collective identifications, however, this study demonstrates that one can consider that feeling provides the drive for fans to invest and to remain committed to a collective identity.

The thesis therefore explores the practices of music identity, the processes and acts of becoming, investing, performing and feeling linked to music subculture participation and identity. Furthermore, it considers the interactive activities and performances that help create (and indeed sustain) the cultural world and the collective identity for the subcultural member.

At the heart of this research are several questions that can be formulated in a number of ways:

1) What are the characteristics, values and rituals of Extreme Metal subculture for my respondents?

2) How do individuals participate in creating and sustaining a sense of Extreme Metal identity? How does one adopt/gain Extreme Metal

identity? How does one retain that identification? How does one transmit and perform an Extreme Metal identity?

3) How might we explain the deep investments that people have in music subcultures? What place does music have in attachments to music subculture? How does music inform and shape deep knowledges of 'self', performative labours and interpersonal relations?

4) How does the character of Extreme Metal music impact upon the social/cultural relations surrounding my respondents' fandom and subcultural participation?

5) Finally, through considering my respondents experiences of Extreme Metal, how do we apprehend the modes and means by which people become embedded in a particular performative/subcultural identity and community?

This thesis is interdisciplinary in nature to the extent that it draws upon a variety of theoretical and empirical resources in order to help explain the range of empirical issues it raises. The research draws upon a number of theoretical traditions (sociology, cultural studies, feminist media), each of them are interdisciplinary in themselves but are pulled together in order to address the many and different aspects of music subculture and identity which my respondents discuss. The analysis draws from various theoretical sources to form an innovative media/culture mode of interpretation. An interdisciplinary approach is adopted in order that I am able to consider the structured nature of Extreme Metal music culture for my respondents. Including the existence of

hierarchies, shared meanings and the systematic processes of membership that form notions of collective identity and taste; whilst arguing that this exists in the sociolinguistic interaction of the community.

The research uses a theoretical approach that places subculture as 'performative feeling community'. It draws on Bourdieuian (1984) concepts of habitus, capital and distinction to consider the structured and hierarchical relations of fan behaviour and identifications. It expands Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of 'legitimate peripheral participation' to consider the processes of labouring and learning involved in becoming, being and retaining Extreme Metal identity. It also draws on Bakhtinian (1981; 1986) accounts of language and Butlerian (1990; 1993) notions of performativity to elaborate on the interactive and iterated nature of subcultural identification and subcultural practices. In relation to such an approach, I adopt Brennan's (2003) concept of 'structures of feeling' to consider the interactive, performative and subcultural nature of accounts of feelings that may communicate something of the character of my respondents' investments in Extreme Metal.

My approach to this thesis is largely Bakhtinian. I consider that meaning, including the meaning of one's self, is rooted in the social process. Subjectivity can be conceived of as something that is always in the process of interaction. I therefore assume that social identities (both individual and collective) are relational and struggled over, conceptualised through language and the perceived likeness to and difference from social others.

Methodological Approach

The thesis makes a methodological contribution to sociology and media/cultural studies through an innovative approach to group research. It suggests a re-examination of the methodological tools required to consider group investments and identifications. Moreover, it introduces a methodological approach of a combination of narrative/memory work, group research, interviews, media and music elicitation.

The focus of this research is to reveal the processes of becoming and being a fan, to give insight into everyday life and kinship; and the affective attachments to music genre fandom and subculture. Such interactions can be researched through methods that centre on producing rich data and via the examination of narratives, discursive constructions, social interactions and memory. I therefore adopt a methodology that involves group research using a combination of innovative methods (the use of semi-structured interviewing, memory work, media elicitation and music elicitation). Each method is utilised to produce diverse 'types' of data, and to facilitate additional responses. Semi-structured group interviews may enable the group to have themed discussions to reveal narrated experience, group identifications and interactions. Memory work is used in order to consider the relationship between individual and collective identities and the construction and performance of identity and life narratives. Media elicitation is utilised to illustrate individual and collective critiques of media and opinions. Music elicitation is used to stimulate group

discussion of attachments and feelings linked to music fandom and to enable participants to attempt to express feelings. Through the adoption of these methods within a research group setting, one can generate thick descriptions and group interactions, and illustrate a group's meaning making. Moreover, as already stated, my involvement as a participant involves taking part in disclosure and acknowledging my own investments and attachments that until now have been evaded, that further serves to introduce researcher reflexivity.

There are several methodological questions related to this approach that this thesis will address, in particular, how did my position as an Extreme Metal fan effect the research process? Can one conduct 'insider research'? How does one understand and interact with the complex power relations of 'insider research'? How did I empower my respondents? What do group interactions offer to an understanding of subcultural identity?

Thesis Aims and Order of Discussion

This thesis aims to contribute to an existing body of work on subcultures, fandom and Metal studies, in a variety of ways:

- To theorise how particular subcultural identities are adopted, managed and sustained. To identify the particular modes of subcultural capital, habitus and ritual work.

- To theorise the dialogic and performative nature of subcultures, in particular how individuals participate with others in creating and sustaining a sense of subcultural identity.

- To highlight the social and cultural place and character of music.

- To ascertain what is the 'Extreme Metalness' of Extreme Metal. The specific character and social/cultural relations surrounding Extreme Metal music (to consider what specific feelings, identifications and communalities are accessed).

- To recuperate subcultural theory as a framework by means of a theory of 'feeling communities' that can tell us not only about the spectacular dimensions of music fandom but its deeper modes of identifications and attachments.

In Chapter 1, I introduce the Extreme Metal music genre and music culture to the audience and highlight its relationship with the cultural rise of 'extremity'. This chapter serves to ascertain the character of Extreme Metal as a music genre and culture and to place it within current debates.

In Chapter 2, I examine the academic research centring on music and culture. This chapter firstly addresses the dismissive academic treatment of Metal, and is followed by a consideration of the growth of serious Metal studies that have influenced this study. It then considers studies of subculture and fandom that have placed little emphasis upon the fan/subculturalist's relationship with music genre. The chapter then reflects on the academic fields that have considered music and the individual. Through reviewing these literatures, I argue for a revised approach to researching music and identity that considers

the fan/subculturalist's everyday attachment to music particularly his/her relationship with music via 'feeling'.

In Chapter 3, I provide a reflection on the study of subculture and the subsequent studies that have moved away from using the term. The chapter introduces a revised approach toward subculture that considers the interactive hierarchical structuring of authentic identities within them. It then indicates how the thesis will differ through introducing my theoretical approach that combines the work of Bakhtin, Butler, Brennan Bourdieu, and Lave and Wenger to address the interactions, etiquettes, labours, performances, kinship and feelings that characterise subculture as a 'performative feeling community'.

Chapter 4 sets out the methodological strategies of the thesis, my methodological experiences within the field and decisions in conducting the study. I reflect on my positioning within the research process in relation to possessing an insider identity and argue for the need for reflexive research. I consider various experiences within the field such as the various challenges to my status. I then discuss my decision to undertake small-scale group research using multiple qualitative methods of semi-structured interview, memory work, media elicitation and music elicitation providing a rationale for each strategy. I outline both the practical methods employed in the project and wider methodological approaches to the data that the research generated.

Representing the first of my analysis chapters, Chapter 5 highlights Extreme Metal's characteristics and the habitus of my respondents as members of a subculture. Drawing on Bourdieu (1984), I consider the display of community values and shared capitals by my respondents alongside their assertion of distinctions, which constructed boundaries and reinforced and managed subcultural community and identity. The chapter considers how my respondents position Extreme Metal as a distinctive community with hierarchical structure and practices of distinction that they invest in to define insiders and outsiders.

In Chapter 6, I consider how Extreme Metal habitus is acquired and identity aligned with via a consideration of the processes of becoming, learning and defending an identity through labouring. This chapter draws on Lave and Wenger's (1991) 'legitimate peripheral participation' to explain the labours of learning, in taking on/adopting an Extreme Metal identity and the labours of defence taken up to manage and sustain those identities. Labour-learning processes, I argue, naturalise my respondents into the community, they are processes by which fans become part of and identify with the music subculture.

In Chapter 7, I argue for a Bakhtinian take on subculture. The chapter highlights that the Extreme Metal subculture, for my respondents, has common idioms, narratives and performative practices. I argue that the Extreme Metal subculture may usefully be understood as a 'performative community', in relation to the respondents' critical and accepting speech, their shared narrative

repertoires and registers that structure their interactions and stories, and their performative practices displayed in their representation of self, style and genre.

In chapter 8, I consider music's relationship with feeling and in so doing I reflect on the specific character of Extreme Metal music and how its 'feeling structures' communicate something of the subculture that surrounds its consumption. The chapter highlights that, for my respondents, Extreme Metal and Extreme Metal subculture have specific feeling structures related to extremity that can be observed in language. In addition, I argue that the cultural nuances of Extreme Metal such as kinship and distinction; learning and labouring, shared speech, narratives and performances discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 places Extreme Metal subculture as a 'feeling community'.

Intended Contributions

As I have so far shown, this thesis makes an epistemological contribution to music subcultures theory. Through its interdisciplinary theoretical approach, in attempting to theorize the relationship between feelings and music culture, and through placing importance upon music genre in that relationship, it makes a significant departure from existing approaches to music fandom, and subculture. Additionally, it highlights the benefits for cultural considerations within musicological research on music cultures. This thesis gives attention to the music genre and culture of Extreme Metal. It explores Extreme Metal fans' relationship with the music genre, their everyday relationship with Extreme Metal music and the processes involved in taking on, investing in and retaining

subcultural identity. Moreover, this thesis advocates a re-examination of the methodological tools required to conduct research on music subculture. Through utilising a blend of qualitative methods in a research group context, I introduce an innovative approach to elicit thick descriptions, and rich data of collective interaction.

In the following chapter the unique history and the characteristics of the genre and subculture of Extreme Metal are explored, in order to situate the research focus.

Chapter 1

What is Extreme Metal?

In order to contextualise my investigation into the behaviours, investments and attachments of Extreme Metal fans, there is a need at the outset to clarify what Extreme Metal is. In this chapter, I introduce 'Extreme Metal' in several respects. First, I consider its 'generic' character, locating it within the larger musical scene of 'Metal' and distinguishing its particular musical shape. I also consider (in generic terms), the larger subcultural textures of the Extreme Metal world including its related activities and performance. Finally, I locate Extreme Metal subculture within a larger 'turn to extremity' that has crossed media and genres in recent years. Throughout this chapter, I argue that Extreme Metal refers, on the one hand, to a distinctive musical repertoire and style, and on the other, to a musical subculture, of which music is only a part. In addition, Extreme Metal can be located in wider cultural elaborations of 'extremity' that serve to question the nature of its generic identity as both a music genre and subculture and that highlight key points of focus for this project.

Extreme Metal Music

Extreme Metal is an overarching term used to group and unite the genres of Death Metal, Grindcore, Black Metal and Doom Metal. The Extreme Metal music genre can be characterised in relation to extremity and its attenuation from Heavy Metal.

Extremity of the Genre

Extreme Metal music is largely characterised by its sonic extremity. This can be seen in the genre's utilisation of extreme forms of tempo[3] (both slow and fast), unconventional song structures, sound-scapes of amplified distortion[4] and vocal manipulations, and lyrical themes that include death, violence and the occult. Extreme Metal therefore presents the listener with an extremity of sound. Kahn-Harris (2007: 5) has pointed to such an extremity of sound existing on the boundary between music and non-music, because: "Extreme Metal music frequently teeters on the edge of formless noise". Weinstein (2000) claims that the sonic, the visual and the verbal dimensions all make crucial contributions to the definition of Heavy Metal as a genre, and indeed the same is true for Extreme Metal. The often shocking lyrical content of Extreme Metal is supported by a delivery of growled, grunted, rasped, shouted or screamed vocal and a bombardment of amplified and distorted sound, accompanied by performance and imagery featuring a dominant masculinity and demonic possession.

A Sub-Genre of Heavy Metal

Extreme Metal has its roots in Heavy Metal, and indeed can be situated in the larger music genre of Metal. Heavy Metal has an emphasis upon power, volume and skill and uses distorted electric guitar with strong rhythm

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[3] Extreme Metal songs often range between 150 and 250 beats per minute (BPM), and when using *blast beat* drumming reach 300-400 BPM and above (Kahn-Harris, 2007: 32).
[4] Distortion is achieved via an effects pedal, amplifier, speaker or digital devices and software that alter the guitar's amplified sound.

(Weinstein, 2000). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Heavy Metal genre arose from Rock[5] music, fusing Psychedelic/Acid Rock[6] to the basic structure of Blues Rock[7]. The first Heavy Metal bands such as *Led Zeppelin* and *Black Sabbath* had strong rhythm, used vocals as instruments, had technical guitar solos and sang lyrics about alienation, the occult and dangerous women (Walser, 1993). By the mid 1970s some musicians had moved away from the Blues influence, adopting an increased tempo and tougher sound inspired by Punk[8], which characterised the rise of the 'New Wave of British Heavy Metal' (NWOBHM) that included bands like *Iron Maiden*, *Saxon* and *Motorhead* (Christe, 2003). From 1979 to 1983, there was a growth of Heavy Metal bands and fans. This period of growth Weinstein (2000) claims finally resulted in a fragmentation of Heavy Metal into sub-genres due to diverse and conflicting styles. It is at this point that Extreme Metal genres emerged, breaking from Heavy Metal codes but remaining part of the Heavy Metal 'family'. The emergence of Extreme Metal genres had much to do with a reaction to the Heavy Metal genre. This was not only to achieve new sounds, but also in attempts to give a literal interpretation of Heavy Metal, indeed, Weinstein (2000: 42) refers to Speed Metal as characterising a "fundamentalist" return to Heavy Metal. The Extreme Metal genres changed the focus and sound of Heavy Metal. The genres of Speed Metal, Thrash, Grindcore and Death Metal created a heavier sound, particularly through increased tempo and technicality,

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[5] Rock music is a loosely defined genre of popular music with roots in Rock and Roll that evolved from rhythm and blues and country music.
[6] Psychedelic/Acid Rock, is rock influenced by psychedelic culture and hallucinogenic drugs, and involved experimentation with musical sound and instruments.
[7] Blues Rock can be characterised by its combination of Blues improvisations combined with Rock seen in bands such as *The Rolling Stones*.
[8] Punk is a movement away from rock sound with stripped-down sound, minimal production, often shouted or slurred vocals and fast and short songs.

Black Metal attempted to seriously portray the subject of the occult and

Satanism; whilst Doom Metal explored the intensities of slow rhythm and

atmosphere. These are issues, which I now explore further.

The Extreme Metal Genres

Extreme Metal music has a specific generic character that separates it from

other forms of 'Metal' music. Extreme Metal consists of a collection of genres

that are distinct from one another, with their own sound structures and with

"different histories, which are constantly developing and reconfiguring"

(Kahn-Harris, 2007: 7). [9]

Speed Metal and Thrash

Speed Metal and Thrash emerged in California between 1981-83 with bands

such as *Anthrax*, *Exodus*, *Megadeth*, *Metallica* and *Slayer*. The genres were

influenced by Punk, Hardcore[10] and the NWOBHM in relation to its pursuit of

speed, and shouted vocals. These influences were combined with the Heavy

Metal standards of distortion and technical guitar solos (that were also fast and

frequent). Band members wore street clothes like their fans rather than

eccentric stage wear and had lyrics about the horrors of the real world, which

Weinstein (2000: 49) also argues separated the genre from Heavy Metal: "The

Speed/Thrash subgenre can be understood to represent as much a

transformation of attitude as a change in music. It pares away the arty, the

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[9] I have chosen only to discuss the key genres of Extreme Metal. It should be noted that each
genre of Extreme Metal has split into many subgenres. I mention some examples in this section
but unfortunately do not have sufficient space to note them all.
[10] Hardcore is a subgenre of Punk Rock that was heavier and faster than earlier Punk Rock.

fantastic, the overblown, and the heroic elements in Heavy Metal". Speed
Metal and Thrash are not always placed in the category of Extreme Metal but
are considered to have had definite influence on the emerging Extreme Metal
genres (Mudrian, 2004).

Death Metal

Death Metal grew out of the extremes of speed in Speed Metal and Thrash and
a concern with the subject of morbidity and death by European Thrash bands
such as *Celtic Frost* and *Sodom* (Purcell, 2003; Mudrian, 2004). Its emergence
has also been linked to the aggressive sounds of 1980s Hardcore Punk[11] such
as *Discharge* and *GBH* (Mudrian, 2004; Zero Tolerance, Jan/Feb; 2007: 28).
The emerging sound was distinct from Heavy Metal:

> Death Metal took the speed of both Hardcore and Thrash to
> build its skeleton, and fleshed this out with churning, down-
> tuned guitars and growling style of singing which provided a
> dramatic antithesis to the falsettos and high-pitched lead vocals
> dominating mainstream Metal at the time.
>
> (Moynihan and Soderlind, 1998: 27)

Death Metal's name originates from its main features: morbid themes and
lyrical descriptions of violence and death, themes that are often shocking and

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[11] Hardcore Punk is a subgenre of Punk Rock originating in UK and US in the late 1970s. It
had a heavier, faster aggressive sound with short, fast and loud songs, often shouted vocals and
a socio-political message.

extreme. Death Metal is "fast, low, powerful, intense and played very loudly" (Purcell, 2003: 9). The genre's sound can be characterised by drumming that uses double bass pedal[12] and blast beats[13] that serve to provide a constant battery of rhythm; electric guitars that are distorted and often down-tuned[14]; and the use of vocal manipulations to convey the lyrics, particularly guttural growling but also grunting, snarling, and screeching. Many subgenres of Death Metal have emerged that are based upon differing styles of tempo, distortion and vocal. Influential subgenre styles of the Death Metal sound were named after the areas from which the styles emerged such as 'Florida Death Metal' characterised by precise and 'clear' (undistorted) guitar and machine-gun like blast beats (*Morbid Angel, Cannibal Corpse*) or 'Swedish Death Metal' characterised by self-conscious moral lyrics, down-tuned guitar, with melody and groove (*Entombed, Dismember*).

Grindcore

Grindcore melds together aspects of Hardcore Punk and Thrash with the guttural vocals and the down-tuned guitars of Death Metal (Mudrian, 2004). Unlike Death Metal, Grindcore has a more political emphasis[15], which is influenced by Hardcore Punk. The genre has a sound defined by tempo and distortion:

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[12] Double-bass pedal is a method of beating the bass drum on the drum kit with a double kick pedal that enables one to hit the drum faster creating fast bass rhythm.
[13] Blast beats involve rapid alternating strokes primarily on the bass and snare drum.
[14] Down-tuned guitar is when the instrument has deliberately had its pitch lowered during tuning.
[15] Grindcore political subjects are particularly left wing in nature, with lyrics expressing support for animal rights and anti-capitalism.

> The [Grindcore] genre these days is often defined by detuned
> guitars, blasting drums (sometimes with a high-tuned clanging
> "biscuit tin" snare drum sound), sickening lyrics and often
> heavily processed/distorted vocals, all of which together make it
> one of the most obnoxious of underground genres.
>
> (Zero Tolerance, May/April 2005: 46)

The Grindcore movement emerged in Birmingham, Britain in the mid 1980s, and is particularly associated with the band *Napalm Death* whose debut album *Scum* (1987) and follow-up album *From Enslavement to Obliteration* (1988) featured extremely fast and short songs (27-28 songs per album). The music was characterised by deep and raspy vocals, fast drums with blast beats, distorted bass, simple and fast guitar work, and socio-political content such as songs addressing animal rights and racism (Purcell, 2003; Mudrian, 2004). *Napalm Death* member Bill Steer's side-project band *Carcass* is also recognised as a key influence on the genre style (Zero Tolerance, May/April 2005: 46). Their debut album *Reek of Putrefaction* (1988) influenced Grindcore with its technical guitar solos, high and low pitched growls and gore-centred lyrics with elaborate medical terminology. Such an emphasis on obsessive and elaborate lyrical content has led to the emergence of subgenres based on one theme such as 'splattercore' that concentrates upon gore[16].

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[16] Lyrics that focus on 'gore' describe the remains of violence, i.e. the blood and guts and damaged body parts.

Doom Metal

Doom Metal is a distinct Extreme Metal genre defined by its slow tempo and *Black Sabbath* inspired sound[17] (Christe, 2003: 345). Doom Metal is also a genre characterised as much by its 'doom' themes:

> By its very nature, doom rarely concerns itself with anything other than the darkside of life and its diet of depression, deprivation, drugs and death makes a striking contrast with the mainstream rock world where we're constantly being told that people don't want to be reminded of their problems and that music should offer a means of escape.
>
> (Terrorizer, May 2006: 42)

The earliest Doom Metal bands were pre-Death Metal and tended to use clean vocals[18], such as *Saint Vitus*, *The Obsessed* and *Candlemass.* A key influence upon the genre was the band *Cathedral*, who played ultra-slow and long songs. Doom Metal as a genre became more defined as an Extreme Metal genre with the rise of Death/Doom Metal. Death/Doom can be characterised by its ultra-slowness, low-pitched guitars and vocals that consist of deep dragging grunts (e.g. *Thergothon, Winter)*. A more serene form of Doom emerged from the UK with the bands *Paradise Lost, My Dying Bride* and *Anathema* that combined the Death/Doom sound with keyboards, violin and deep-voiced spoken

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[17] *Black Sabbath*'s sound can be characterised by its incorporation of dark occult and horror inspired lyrics with down-tuned distorted electric guitars and driving rhythm.
[18] 'Clean vocals' is a term used to refer to sung or spoken, clear and undistorted vocals.

passages. In the mid 1990s, the use of female soprano vocals alongside male growled vocals emerged in the Doom genre (such as *Theatre of Tragedy*) that influenced the formation of a new and separate genre named Gothic Metal[19]. The subgenres within Doom Metal explore the different aspects of extremeness, slowness and rhythm, such as the slowness and ambience of 'Funeral Doom (e.g. *Funeral*); the minimalist distortions, down-tuned guitar and often absent vocals and drums of 'Drone Doom' (e.g. *Sunn0)))*); and the *Black Sabbath* inspired and psychedelic sound of 'Stoner Doom' (e.g. *Electric Wizard*).

Black Metal

Unlike Death Metal, Black Metal uses a rough textured and often low production sound[20] with repetitive rhythms. The first wave of the genre (although at the time was not recognised as such) is characterised by the sound of 1980s bands *Venom*, *Sodom* and *Bathory* that had a low production sound, repetitive rhythm, and combined Thrash guitar with screamed and barked vocals and satanic/occult imagery (Terrorizer, Feb 2005: 37). Black Metal's 'second generation' sound originated in Norway, it was consciously created when several of Norway's Death Metal bands (such as *Mayhem* and *Darkthrone*) decided to turn towards creating 'Black Metal' based around the concept of producing music that was satanic (Moynihan and Soderlind, 1998).

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[19] Gothic Metal incorporates many different styles of Hard Rock and Metal genres with melancholic and mournful inspiration from Doom Metal and Goth.
[20] Low production refers to the studio production of the music. At first Black Metal bands' limited budgets meant production was low cost, which produced lo-fi quality (that contained technical flaws such as limited frequency, distortion and background noise). Many artists deliberately record in this way to remain dedicated to the original Black Metal sound.

The Norwegian scene and the genre Black Metal is often associated with the church burnings, suicide and murders that are linked with its main figures.[21] The scene was also visually and sonically distinct; visually these bands used anti-Christian imagery and adopted a theatrical styling using corpse paint[22], and props such as weaponry. Sonically it comprised the sound of distorted 'unearthly' vocals, low production and trance-like rhythm. Notably Black Metal was not concerned with technicality and guitar solos rather the production of a cold 'evil' atmosphere:

> Some [bands] sounded harsher than others, but the one thing
> that was key to the genre was the ability to paint a dark picture
> with music of the sort that would penetrate the soul with ice at
> 50 paces.
>
> (Terrorizer, Feb 2005: 37)

Black Metal subgenres have formed around particular styles, for example, 'Symphonic Black Metal' can be characterised by its use of its overriding keyboard synths[23] (e.g. *Dimmu Borgir*). Subgenres have additionally been formed around ideologies such as National Socialism and Paganism. Other

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[21] *Mayhem* band member 'Dead' committed suicide in 1991. Several traditional stave churches suffered arson in 1992, which led to the conviction of prominent Black Metal musicians Count Grishnakh of *Burzum* and Samoth of *Emperor*. Bard "Faust" Eithun of *Emperor* was convicted of stabbing a gay man to death in local woodland. Euronymous (Oysten Aarseth), member of Black Metal band *Mayhem*, was stabbed to death by Count Grishnakh (Varg Vikernes) of *Burzum* on 10th August 1993. (See Moynihan and Soderlind (1998) for a detailed account of these events).
[22] Corpse paint is a style of makeup worn predominantly on the face by some Black Metal musicians. It is usually black and white and worn like war paint (with symmetrical pattern) or worn to make one appear corpse-like.
[23] Use of a keyboard synthesizer that involves generating and modifying sounds electronically.

Black Metal bands have combined other Extreme Metal genre styles, for instance the depressive atmospheres of Doom Metal into 'Suicidal Black Metal' (e.g. *Xasthur).*

The Extreme Metal genres, described above, have many other subgenres. Some bands cross the divides of the Extreme Metal genres, some cross over into the Heavy Metal genre through the adoption of Heavy Metal tempos, clean vocals and widening their thematic content. Despite such continued variations and splitting of genres, Extreme Metal music has a shared history with Heavy Metal and has a particular musical shape. From this brief glimpse into the historical emergence of Extreme Metal genres and their defining sounds, one can come to appreciate that they are stylistically diverse but emerged in search of extremity, intensity and dissonance in music. The emergence of these sounds involved the repetition, creation and combination of existing Heavy and Extreme Metal sounds. They therefore have a distinct place in the musical scene of Metal. They are defined, in part, by shared histories and their pursuit and performance of extremity.

Extreme Metal Subculture

I have so far illustrated that Extreme Metal has common characteristics as a music genre, but Extreme Metal additionally has subcultural textures. Extreme Metal has identifiable characteristics related to the interactions of its fans (which I go on to explore within this thesis), for now my attention will be focused upon describing the central generic qualities that characterise the UK

subculture. I begin with a consideration of its composition and go on to describe the key activities, performances and style that are associated with it.

Extreme Metal music has been globally dispersed, giving rise to localised scenes. Kahn-Harris (2000; 2004; 2007) presents Extreme Metal as a global scene, arguing that regional and national scenes "share enough musically and institutionally so that we are able to talk of them as quasi-autonomous parts of a wider global extreme metal scene" (2007: 99). From my observations of Extreme Metal activities, particularly at Extreme Metal live events, the majority of the Extreme Metal audience in the UK are white and male with females probably constituting no more than a third of the audience. The Extreme Metal audience is of a mixed age, although unlike many music cultures it is not specifically made up of youths, instead, fans tend to be over sixteen with the majority being in their twenties and early thirties. The audience is also of a mixed social class background with a large proportion of educated middle class people. Heavy Metal is frequently associated with 'low' culture and seen as a cultural signifier of white working class masculinity.[24] Extreme Metal is, however, distinct from Heavy Metal. It may borrow idioms and traits of Heavy Metal but its audience differs. In fact Extreme Metal displays more in common with 'high brow' cultures that can be seen in its celebration of aesthetics, virtuosity and cultivated taste,[25] not withstanding its obscenities and sound.

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[24] It has been shown that Heavy Metal in Britain had strong links to the working class and appeared working class, although class politics remained largely absent in the subculture (Moore, 2009; Nilsson, 2009).
[25] I give this 'high' culture aesthetic further consideration in Chapter 5.

Extreme Metal is characterised by the subcultural nuances that can be seen in the subcultural activities of its fans. The building up of Extreme Metal record/CD collections and the sharing of Extreme Metal music, both between friends and strangers are central activities. This was originally through tape trading[26] but now, with the rise of the Internet, activities are diverse including 'file sharing'[27] via online communities. Some fans contribute to Extreme Metal fanzines or e-zines[28], and/or participate in online forums and submit their own album reviews and 'scene' news. Many Extreme Metal subculture members are musicians, taking part in their own creation and production of Extreme Metal music. The subculture can be characterised, therefore, by the active participation of its fans.

A key characteristic of Extreme Metal as a subculture can be related to its live performance. A key practice that unites fans is the attendance of the live performances (gigs) of Extreme Metal bands. Touring and concerts have been highlighted to be important for both Heavy Metal and Extreme Metal (Weinstein, 2000; Kahn-Harris, 2007). In the US Death Metal scene, Purcell (2003: 31) comments that the live show is at the "heart" of the Death Metal subculture. In the UK, the live show is also central to the Extreme Metal subculture. It is an opportunity for public/scene promotion for Extreme Metal

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[26] Tape trading involves the swapping of music, this is at no cost rather one cassette or CD is traded for another from personal collections.
[27] By file sharing, I am referring to music files (such as MP3's) being transferred from one person to another.
[28] A fanzine (or zine) is a magazine written and produced by fans. This practice has also moved onto the Internet (e-zines).

bands. It is also an occasion for Extreme Metal fans to show support to a band,

interact with other fans and share their passion for music. Extreme Metal gigs

in the UK mainly occur in cities, with fans travelling (often great distances) to

see bands across the country. The gig experience itself often involves the

consumption of alcohol and the physicality of head banging[29] and moshing[30]

(although some members of the live audience avoid physical activity). The

Extreme Metal gig therefore shares much in common with the Heavy Metal gig

in that there is a mosh pit[31] at the front of the stage, and audience members take

part in physical expressions such as head banging. Where it differs from Heavy

Metal is that there is often a refusal to move by some of the live audience

taking an 'anti-mosh stance'[32], and in the case of the genre of Doom Metal, the

music's tempo is unnaturally slow to achieve the same levels of physicality.

Another key generic characteristic of Extreme Metal is the shared dress-style

of its fans. Extreme Metal style varies slightly in relation to each Extreme

Metal genre, but is united by the importance placed on the Extreme Metal T-

shirt. Metal T-shirt culture, has been described by Brown (2005) as a key

semaphoric and consumptive aspect of the Metal community. Likewise, Kahn-

Harris (2007) has highlighted the importance of the T-shirt in Extreme Metal

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[29] Head banging is a physical act most often at live events, in which the Metal fan moves his/her head rapidly up and down to the beat/rhythm of the music.

[30] Moshing involves violent movements, pushing, shoving in the circle of the mosh pit at the live event.

[31] At a live Heavy Metal or Extreme Metal 'gig' or concert the 'mosh pit' is situated at the front of the stage and is an area where the audience members take part in head-banging, and physical acts of expression that sometimes border on violence.

[32] The 'anti-mosh' stance involves audience members' refusal to move. The term originated from the Black Metal scene. The phrase 'Anti mosh' appeared on the CD codes of Deathlike Silence Productions an independent record label founded in the late 1980s in Oslo, Norway by Aarseth (aka. Euronymous in Black Metal band *Mayhem*) and represented by the Black Metal slogan 'No Mosh, No Fun, No Core'.

fan interaction. The typical Extreme Metal T-Shirt has a prominent band logo (often logos are indecipherable to the non-Extreme Metal fan) and often displays depictions of death, violence or satanic and/or anti-Christian/anti-religious imagery. In addition to the band T-shirt, Extreme Metal fans often display tattoos and body piercings. Male fans usually wear their hair long or shave their heads and it is common for them to have facial hair and beards. The band t-shirt is accessorized with black boots, spiked or bullet belts[33], leather jackets, or sleeveless denim jackets decorated with patches displaying band logos. Female fans often wear the same style of clothing as male fans, or adopt gothic[34] fashions. The Extreme Metal fan may not stand out clearly from a member of Heavy Metal culture, rather s/he relies upon the T-shirt's semaphoric value that serves to communicate 'insider' identity to other Extreme Metal fans.[35]

Extreme Metal has generic textures as a subculture. I have highlighted that Extreme Metal culture has many similarities with Heavy Metal culture, but that it is also distinct in several respects. The performances of live music and style, in particular, have distinctive nuances from wider Metal cultures. In addition, fans can be seen to produce and sustain the subculture through their common activities.

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[33] These are belts covered in conical studs or empty bullet shells.
[34] Gothic fashions can be characterised by dark dyed hair, black clothing. This includes long flowing skirts and dresses, corsets or eroticised PVC fashions.
[35] I go on to further discuss the communication of Extreme Metal style in Chapter 5.

The Cultural Turn to Extremity

I now consider how Extreme Metal is situated in popular culture, particularly with what I argue has been a cultural turn to extremity in the fields of media and music genres. I highlight the contradictory positioning of Extreme Metal in a culture where extremity is increasingly being mainstreamed, which leads to questions centred on authenticity and struggles over definitions of Extreme Metal, so that extremity and the pursuit of dissonance becomes a contradictory goal. I begin by considering Extreme Metal in relation to extremity and how it is positioned as counter-culture, and then examine the cultural changes that complicate the positioning of Extreme Metal. I end with a discussion of the impact of these changes on Extreme Metal and what this means for those who frequent its locales.

I have already illustrated how Extreme Metal as a genre is characterised by a sense of extremity. Extremity can also be applied to the subcultural character of Extreme Metal. Kahn-Harris (2007) relates Extreme Metal's extremity to transgression, because there is a distinct sense of the testing and crossing of boundaries, arguing that this includes sonic, discursive and bodily transgression. As we have seen, the Extreme Metal genre partly arose from a pursuit of extremities of sound in Heavy Metal, and has also pursued and reflected extremity via its thematic and lyrical content. 'Extremity' can be viewed not only in the genre characteristics of Extreme Metal but also the style and physical response at the live event and language of its fans. In some cases, it has additionally been characterised by the extreme actions of musicians (as

has been the case in Norwegian Black Metal).[36] There are also right-wing and/or racist, 'extreme' politics associated with the Extreme Metal music genre of Black Metal. Goodrick-Clarke (2003) has highlighted the development of a National Socialist following of the Black Metal genre and Beckwith (2002) has explored the white supremacist politics of prominent Black Metal musicians and the symbols within the genre that reinforce such politics. In contrast, Kahn-Harris (2004b) discusses the inherent problems facing a music scene that accepts and even encourages 'extremity' of content. He highlights the existence of 'extreme' politics and the high level of violence and hatred within the global Black Metal scene. He argues that a key contradiction within the Black Metal scene is the "reflexive anti-reflexivity" of its musicians and members. There is an acceptance by participants in the Black Metal scene that anything is publicly sayable, no matter how offensive. Any conflict with politics is privately worked through and not publicly challenged by those participants. The refusal to challenge politics and the adoption of a laissez-faire approach means that racist and sexist discourse is accepted by those participating in the Extreme Metal scene, it is not subject to challenge, is condoned and encouraged and thus continues to exist.

Extreme Metal can be regarded as a counter-culture due to its extremity (or transgression). Its extremity separates it from the Heavy Metal genre and subculture. Extreme Metal bands have lower record sales than Heavy Metal bands, "No label – major or otherwise has actually succeeded in enjoying

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[36] I have already mentioned that there were several violent events that characterised the era of the emergence of Black Metal in Norway in the early 1990s.

platinum success with a Death Metal band" (Terrorizer, December 2006: 47).
Extreme Metal bands rarely make a substantial living from their music and
musicians often have to hold down other jobs (Kahn-Harris, 2007). When they
emerged, the Extreme Metal genres functioned outside of the corporate
structures of the music industry, through being created and distributed via
small-scale, non-corporate record labels and global underground scenes
(Mudrian, 2004; Kahn-Harris, 2007). Extreme Metal bands, genres and scenes
draw upon the notion of Extreme Metal being an underground musical form
and movement.[37] Notions of authentic Extreme Metal are not only via ideas
about extremity of sound but also the position of the music genre and
subculture against the 'mainstream'.

In the present cultural climate to claim oneself 'extreme' is problematic, due to
a notable cultural shift towards extremity. This shift can be seen in changes in
media, and its multiplicity of content. A rise in extremity is visible in the
increased exposure of sex and violence in the media, such as the content of
videogames and the graphic content of films. The shift is also reflected by the
'cruelty realism', "characterised by gross spectacle and humiliation of and by
ordinary people" present in reality TV shows such as game shows, talk shows
(Epstein and Steinberg, 2003: 93) and seen in documentary footage (Epstein
and Steinberg, 2007). It can also be represented by the coverage of activities
considered 'extreme', for example 'extreme' makeover via the spectacle of
cosmetic surgery. The growth of the posting of self-made videos on the

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[37] Underground is used by Extreme Metal fans to refer to the scene, to non-signed bands, the
anti-mainstream factions of Extreme Metal and is used to claim something is 'authentic'.

Internet, popular with the rise of web-hosts such as 'You Tube'[38], has also increased the diversity of what can be viewed and heard. Extremity is therefore becoming a normative factor in popular media and culture and that, in effect, extremity has become democratised. As a result, Extreme Metal's indices of extremity, such as its musical and performative style that position Extreme Metal as alternative and counter-culture, now appear contradictory. The democratisation of extremity threatens to disenfranchise Extreme Metal's extremity. It indicates extremity does not have the cultural impact it once had.

The cultural shift towards extremity is not only visible in media but also in music genre. It is not only Extreme Metal that has 'extreme' characteristics in its music and subculture. Within popular Metal music, one can see examples of extremity in lyrics and imagery. Extremity permeates other (more popular) music genres and artists. This can be seen in the association of *Marilyn Manson* with shock and extreme imagery and the moral panic that surrounded the Columbine high school massacre[39] which was linked to *Marilyn Manson*[40] fans (Wright, 2000). It is, however, not only extreme content, but also the sonics of extremity that are increasingly seen within other genres. For example, popular Metal band *Slipknot* use musical traits from the Extreme Metal music genres such as drumming with blast-beats and double bass pedal, and growling vocals which place the band at the boundary of Extreme Metal, although remaining unaccepted by the majority of Extreme Metal musicians and fans

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[38] 'You Tube' is a video sharing website, where users upload, view and share video clips.
[39] The Columbine high school massacre (20/04/99) involved two students who embarked on a massacre, killing 12 students and a teacher and wounding 23 others before committing suicide.
[40] Marilyn Manson is a musician and band that plays dark Metal music that has crossed over several genre styles including Industrial Metal, Hard Rock, Goth and Glam Rock.

(Mudrian, 2004: 256-8). Hebdige (1979) has argued that overtime a subculture's signifiers face cultural incorporation by the dominant culture, which in effect defuse their signifying power. The 'mainstreaming' of Metal subcultural styles and music genres have been linked to wider claims of a movement towards the "commodification of dissent" and the corporate cultivation of the "rebel consumer" (Frank and Weiland, 1997). This is most visible in the existence of what Halnon (2005) names 'F*** the mainstream music in the mainstream' with the success of bands (such as *Slipknot, Limp Bizkit, Marilyn Manson* and *Eminem*) who are popular for their rebellious antics, lyrics and rage that, in effect, have commodified the alienation experience. The genre shifts towards extremity, place the unacceptable as accepted and something associated with underground music within the mainstream. It has thus become harder to claim and justify Extreme Metal as underground music or as counter-culture, due to the permeation of extremity into other genres.

The cultural shift towards extremity has been accompanied by an expansion in media and Internet technology. These developments also complicate Extreme Metal's position. The Internet offers the potential to obtain information about Extreme Metal. It thus has removed the possibilities for the existence of an untouched Extreme Metal underground. Indeed, the growth of the Internet has removed many characteristics of Extreme Metal, the music is no longer hard to get hold of (it can be legally and illegally downloaded); and its imagery, history and characteristics can be found and consumed (such as on

Wikipedia[41]). With the rise of the Internet and the increased exposure of Extreme Metal, the possibilities for Extreme Metal music to remain underground are reduced.

So, where do these cultural shifts leave Extreme Metal? Having demonstrated that one of the generic characteristics of Extreme Metal is extremity, which has also served to place it outside of the 'mainstream'; the democratisation of extremity make the placement of the genre and subculture as 'underground' and counter-culture contradictory. On the one hand, Extreme Metal can be seen as part of the shift towards extremity, i.e. as an example of the cultural consumption of extremity; on the other hand, the shift towards extremity has removed some of Extreme Metal's impact as counter-culture.

Extreme Metal is unable to remain outside the wider public eye due to the changes in media and acceptance of extremity. Extreme Metal does, however, continue to be sustained as both a music genre and subculture. In his consideration of Extreme Metal scene practices, Kahn Harris (2004) argues that extremity is situated as mundane. It is part of the everyday for the fan. The focus of Extreme Metal has therefore shifted to the stylistic characteristics and sounds of the genres. Despite these sounds being perceived as extreme, the importance is placed on the inherited genre and pursuing its development or recreating the sounds. The subculture is also retained through the distinctions of authenticity, work, interactions and alternative discourses within the

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[41] Wikipedia is a free encyclopaedia on the Internet, written collaboratively by volunteers around the world and can be edited by users.

Extreme Metal community that I will go on to explore in this thesis. Extreme Metal is defined by its extremity but also has subcultural nuances that continue its existence in changing times.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the genre and subcultural characteristics of Extreme Metal and how it is situated in the present cultural climate. In turn, I have highlighted that Extreme Metal is distinct from other Heavy Metal genres. I have shown that Extreme Metal has a distinct generic character as music and as a subculture within the wider family of 'Metal'. Extreme Metal has generic qualities related to musical form, subcultural activities and style.

Extreme Metal is characterised by its extremity, yet this does not mean it has particular counter-culture value. There are many aspects of the wider society and popular culture that are celebrating and consuming the extreme. Extremity is not limited to the genre of Extreme Metal and is now a characteristic of the mainstream that Extreme Metal situates itself against. In the second part of the chapter, I have considered Extreme Metal's association and relationship with 'extremity', which situates it as distinct and full of apparent contradictions. This has pointed to the need to understand investments in extremity, and its place in Extreme Metal subculture.

The chapter has also illustrated the importance of Extreme Metal as a music genre in understanding Extreme Metal's subcultural nuances. In the next

chapter, I address the literature surrounding the study of 'Metal' and music

culture and highlight the distinct absence in that literature of considerations of

the nature of music genres and people's attachments to them.

Chapter 2

Neglecting Music; Researching Music Culture

In the previous chapter, I considered Extreme Metal's generic character as a genre and a subculture. I argued that the characteristics of Extreme Metal as a music genre had impact on its related subculture, particularly in relation to extremity. It is to the academic treatment of music and music culture that this chapter turns. Music is central to many people's identities and is a defining factor in their interaction with others. Music can produce pleasure and feelings and is a source of both personal attachment and/or collective affiliation. This chapter discusses the fields in which music culture has been researched. It identifies the distinct gaps in existing literatures and, in so doing, situates my research. I argue that the relationship between music and identity is under-theorized. When researching music identities, writers have largely focused upon collective rebellion; or lone fans with their desires placed upon a particular celebrity, not the fans' and collective's relationship with music per se.

In order to consider where music 'fits' in studies of music fans and culture, this chapter presents the key fields in which music culture and music-affiliated identities have been researched. It calls attention to the gaps in those fields in considering the fan/subculturalist's relationship with music and the distinct qualities of music genres that impact upon the cultures and identities that surround them. The chapter considers the field of subcultural studies, and the

limited consideration of people's relationship with music/music genre and the everyday. Following this, it reflects on the study of music fandom, and the attention centred upon 'low' culture, fan attachments, and fan relationships with music artists rather than music genres. The chapter then turns to research across the disciplines of musicology and psychology that have placed emphasis on the character of music genres and the relationship between the individual and music that can influence the study of music culture. I consequently argue, that there is a need for a revised interdisciplinary approach to researching music and collective identity that considers the fan/subculturalist's everyday attachment to music, particularly his/her relationship with music via 'feeling'.

The chapter begins with a consideration of the research surrounding 'Metal' music and culture. I consider the academic neglect and dismissal of Metal and the emergence of Metal studies that attempt to portray the cultural nuances of the music genre, its fans, and related subculture. In so doing, I situate my thesis in relation to this growing field.

Metal Studies

Metal literature has tended to focus on quite different music than this study. Metal is not a singular genre or subculture. As I highlighted in Chapter 1, although Extreme Metal belongs in the family of Metal, it is distinctive in its sound and culture. The literature that concentrates on Metal music and culture tends to focus upon Heavy Metal and the more popular Metal genres, but they do provide some influence on this study. The various genres of Metal music,

the fans and their cultures have received limited attention in subcultural and fandom studies. The studies that do exist have been dismissive of Metal music or have tended to focus on the spectacular elements of Metal performance and culture. Metal literature (notwithstanding its problems) has opened up the field in a number of ways, which this project takes up.

Although Heavy Metal was popular in the UK in the 1970s, and its music and culture was rapidly developing, its positioning as a subculture was largely disregarded. Heavy Metal did not receive the same academic attention as other music-centred collective identities of that period, such as Punk, Mod and Skinhead culture (Brown, 2003). Academics were dismissive of Heavy Metal having subcultural status, with some ridiculing Heavy Metal music and fans. Hebdige (1979: 155), for example, only referred to Heavy Metal in his study *Subculture* in a footnote that described Heavy Metal fans taking part in "idiot dancing". Similarly, Cashmore (1984:37) derided Heavy Metal fans as follows:

> Heavy Metals didn't want to change society; and, for that matter
> they didn't want it to remain the same. They just wanted a little
> corner of it where they could introvert to their own sphere,
> escaping to a fantasy world in which they played imaginary
> guitars and shook heads into states of concussion.

Metal music and fans were viewed as conformist and not politically or culturally resistant. The assumption that Heavy Metal did not really add up as a

subculture was partly because the music genre was considered 'sell-out' and

commercial. Heavy Metal has been considered a popular music genre with a

mass audience (Straw, 1993). Due to its popularity, the Heavy Metal music

genre and the music industry are assumed to "cash in" on youthful rebellion by

marketing controversial, rebellious and angry music (Gross, 1990; Frank and

Weiland, 1997; Halnon, 2005). The subcultural elements of Metal may have

also been dismissed because it was seen to celebrate dominant discourses of

masculinity. Metal music and fans are associated with macho identities.

Studies have described the domination of male fans and performers and lyrical

themes centring on male fears, fantasy and violence (Arnett, 1996; Sloat,

1998). Heavy Metal has also been related to the posturing of a distinct male

sexuality. For instance, in their discussion of 'Cock Rock'[42], Frith and

McRobbie (1990 [1978]: 374) link the characteristics of the music with

sexuality:

> […] mikes and guitars are phallic symbols; the music is loud,
>
> rhythmically insistent, built around techniques of arousal and
>
> climax; the lyrics are assertive and arrogant, though the exact
>
> words are less significant than the vocal styles involved, the
>
> shouting and screaming.

Here, Heavy Metal music and performance are symbolised as expressions of

sexually aggressive masculinity. Moreover, Heavy Metal's 'invisibility' in

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[42] Frith and McRobbie (1990) refer to 'Cock Rock' to describe Heavy Metal.

subcultural theory may be due to Heavy Metal's mass audience and its distinct masculine stylization of working class 'macho' being dependent on consumption (Brown, 2003; 2005). Brown (2005) argues that Heavy Metal seeks to transcend class via dramatization and consumption. It is thus not resistance, but consumption and escapism that are assumed to drive the subculture.

When Heavy Metal has been the subject of research, in several cases it has been associated with societal problems. There are some academics that claim that Heavy Metal music has a negative impact on its listeners (and in particular heterosexual, white, working class, adolescent male fans). For instance, problem behaviours, risk taking and suicide have been argued to be at higher levels amongst Heavy Metal fans (Martin et al., 1993; Christenson and Roberts, 1998; Selfhout et al., 2008). In addition, a number of US sociological studies have attributed Metal's popularity to the rise of an alienated generation. Gaines' (1990) ethnographic study of working-class youth culture in an American town argues that within American working class suburbia there exist 'burn out kids' who have a shared experience of fatalism, linked to their music choice of Thrash, Industrial, Grunge and Death Metal. Similarly, Arnett's (1996) empirical study of 'Metalheads', interprets Heavy Metal (with its linked violence and alienation) as a consolation for poor family relationships and the breakdown of the family. Heavy Metal has been understood, therefore, as a product of American society's troubles.

Although a large amount of academic writing on Heavy Metal has been dismissive of the music genre and assumed that it did not really add up to a subculture, there does exist a small body of work of serious Metal scholarship that gives attention to the characteristics of Metal music and the subcultural participation of Metal fans. Several studies have emerged to readdress the subcultural status of Metal and have particularly placed emphasis on the spectacular elements of Metal subculture. In Weinstein's (2000) consideration of the characteristics of Heavy Metal subculture, her principal focus is on the spectacular aspects of Heavy Metal such as subcultural fashion, the spectacle of performance and members' practices, and the visible themes arising from Heavy Metal lyrics and album art. Walser (1993) has further highlighted the spectacular and gender-blurred fashion of Heavy Metal performers that contrast with macho imagery and lyrics. The importance of subcultural fashion is also reinforced by Brown (2005), who claims that participation in Heavy Metal subculture is experienced via commercially produced commodities such as the band T-shirt. Through wearing a band T-shirt, fans are able to convey their taste in music, authenticity and collective identification to other Metal fans. Other elements that have received attention in Metal studies also highlight the limited nature of previous claims made about Heavy Metal. For instance, Earl (2009) demonstrates that the relationship between Heavy Metal and the mainstream is complex, with notions of authenticity shifting between valuing the anti-commercial and the successful as Heavy Metal bands become popular.

Another key contribution in the most recent Metal literature is the recognition of the distinctive gender relations that are performatively played out in the Metal context. In an attempt to explore gender relations within Heavy Metal subculture, Krenske and McKay (2000) studied female Heavy Metal fans at an Australian Heavy Metal club. From participant observations and interviews, they argued that the forceful corporeal practices of men and highly gendered structures of power meant that women "did" gender on "men's terms". Even if they were drawn to Heavy Metal to escape an oppressive context, females participating in it are depicted as merely inserting themselves into another regime that keeps women in their place. The article serves to highlight the various competing femininities in the club and the spatial struggles of the club environment that may be more widely experienced in Heavy Metal subculture. The article assumes that women are participating in order to gain empowerment or to escape dominant regimes, yet does not acknowledge the possibility that fans insert themselves into fan communities because of their shared appreciation of music. Just because masculinity is celebrated, this does not prevent female participation or render female fans subordinate. As Weinstein (2009) illustrates, British Heavy Metal is suffused with signs of masculinity and valorises this through the themes of power and chaos; but masculinity, she argues, is a positive expression of power for all of its fans. Likewise, although recognising Heavy Metal to be masculine in character, particularly in its celebration of power, Walser (1993) argues that women are also able to access this power because there are no fixed ways to police who listens to music and how one interprets it.

The recent literature on Metal has not only been confined to the genre of Heavy Metal. There have emerged several valuable studies on Extreme Metal music culture that have investigated what would traditionally be considered 'subcultural' aspects of its culture such as collective values and practices. Several studies to investigate the collective participation in Extreme Metal have positioned it as a global 'scene', a concept used to refer to shared music and cultural institutions (Baulch, 2003; 2007; Kahn-Harris, 2000; 2004; 2007). Extreme Metal studies have largely focused upon the participants in Extreme Metal scenes. For instance, Purcell (2003) illustrates the shared sense of values within the US Death Metal subculture and the importance of music genre to fans' attachments and investments within the subculture. A key contribution to this body of work is Kahn-Harris' (2007) *Extreme Metal* that considers the politics and infrastructure of the global Extreme Metal scene, through comparing scene practices in several countries (the UK, Sweden and Israel). Kahn-Harris explores the experience of Extreme Metal scene within the everyday life of its members. He characterises the scene as the experience of both the transgressive and the mundane; the scene sets up boundaries whilst transgressing others. The study draws on Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of 'capital' and 'habitus' and Thornton's (1995) 'subcultural capital' to characterise how the scene produces hierarchy. Two forms of subcultural capital are identified: 'transgressive subcultural capital', which can be seen in members' individualism and their display of a lack of attachment to the scene, and 'mundane subcultural capital', which can be seen in fans' knowledge about

Extreme Metal and a commitment to work hard for the scene. Kahn-Harris recognises that music is placed at the centre of scene members' lives, but he claims members were reluctant to talk about the relationship between music and self. He considers the ways in which members experience the scene, arguing that scenic experience is equivalent to musical experience. Yet it is music that features in the everyday (mundane) lives of the scene members, and may deserve greater attention.

There has been a particular gap in Metal literatures on music and affect. Focus has generally centred on the spectacular aspects and social relations of Metal culture rather than the more personal experiences of being a subcultural member. It is, however, the fan or subculturalist's relationship with music that may offer insight into participation in Metal subcultures. Walser (1993) claims that music is central to the fan experience of Heavy Metal culture. He argues that music genres are comparable to Bakhtin's speech genres because the meaning of genre depends upon both its prior meaning and what the listener brings to the experience. Despite Heavy Metal being a maligned music genre, he highlights that it actually shares much in common with classical music. Furthermore, he claims that the often controversial Heavy Metal subject matter of violence, power, mysticism and madness is an attempt to critique and comprehend the world. Several studies that consider Extreme Metal music focus upon the aggression and chaotic elements of the music and interpret it as reflecting the social circumstances in which it was created. For example, Harrell (1994) identifies the Death Metal sound as an expression of the

emotional isolation and violence of industrialisation. Similarly, in his article on the musical perception of Death Metal music for a Death Metal musician, Berger (1999: 172-3) highlights the empowering effect of Death Metal, which he places as, "a proactive response to apathy, a way of overcoming hopelessness" for its fans. Although these studies consider Metal music, it is the societal impact of music that is focused upon rather than the particular personal affective experience it may offer the listener. In her description of the Metal concert, Weinstein (2000) considers Heavy Metal to have emotional appeal (referred to as "ecstasy") that is linked to the experience of the concert and the physical practices of moshing and headbanging. Unfortunately, she does not explore the similar emotions that may feature in fans' everyday enjoyment of Heavy Metal music. In this study, therefore, I argue for the importance of looking at the affective and personal relationship with music to consider and develop further understanding of the fan/subculturalist.

Metal has received dismissive academic treatment in the past, because of its association with the popular mainstream, masculine posturing and consumption. When Heavy Metal has featured in research, often the negative impact of the music on its fans has been focused upon. Focus has, however moved and Metal has had its status as a subculture reinforced. There are still many gaps in research on Metal; particular emphasis has been placed upon the masculine themes and male domination of the culture, whilst only a few key studies have emerged to consider Metal culture and Metal music. With the emergence of Extreme Metal studies, this has been further developed

particularly by Kahn-Harris' (2000; 2004; 2007) work, to show the workings of music institutions and fans in creating scenes. This academic literature on Metal introduces developed analysis on questions of class, attachment and performativity in the discussion of Metal music fandom and subcultural participation. My research will draw on some of the existing themes in the literature, but I am less interested in making claims about the global Extreme Metal scene and more interested in my respondents' investments in, and identifications with Extreme Metal. My research aims to expand the areas so far investigated within Metal studies. In particular, I intend to show something more of the dynamics of participation and the personal attachments, investments and feelings associated with the fandom of the Extreme Metal music genre and membership of Extreme Metal subculture. Moreover, I want to reveal the distinct nuances of the music genre and the fans' relationship to it. The relationship between the fan/subculturalist and music has been a neglected one both within subculture and fan studies. It is this problem that I now go on to discuss.

Music in Subcultural Studies

The above considerations of Metal studies have, in certain respects, highlighted the limited focus of subcultural studies. I give more consideration to the developments of subcultural theory in the next chapter, but there are several points worth mentioning here. In particular, the lack of attention given to the relationship between the subculturalist and the music s/he forms an identity around. Here I consider the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural

Studies (CCCS) approach to subculture and subsequent studies on music culture that, through a focus upon resistance, have not addressed the distinct attachment people have with music. I then discuss the movement to consider the everyday role of music in fan and subculture members' lives.

Many of the CCCS' studies of youth subcultures placed emphasis on several music subcultures that possessed spectacular style. Such style was presented as symbolic class resistance to the dominant culture. For instance, Clarke (1976/2006: 99) argues that skinhead style was "an attempt to recreate the 'mob', the traditional working class community" and Hebdige (1976/2006) claims mod style was a reaction to the mundanity of the working week. The CCCS' association of subcultural consumption with working-class resistance, Miles (1995: 35) argues, meant that these academics failed to concentrate on the actual meanings that young consumers would give to their subcultural participation. Music subcultures were considered in relation to the symbolic meanings that music genres were seen to embody rather than subcultural members' investments and attachments to music. For instance, Hebdige (1979) describes the social history of reggae centring on the attached symbols and values of the West Indian community and the appropriation of style by later emerging white working class music cultures such as punk, skinhead and mod. In his book, *Profane Culture,* Willis (1978) considers music genre preference to be a reflection of lifestyle. For example, bikers are shown to look for features in popular music that parallel bike culture and thus identify with Rock 'n' Roll beats. Rock 'n' Roll, therefore, is positioned as an object/artefact used

to construct and express biker identity. One can therefore claim, as Hesmondhalgh (2005: 31) has, that "the CCCS work on youth subcultures was never really about music" music was only considered an object used to construct subcultural identity rather than something that people form strong attachments to, and gain great pleasure from.

Many studies of music subcultures/communities continue to take into account seemingly everything other than the members' relationship with the music. 'Riot Grrrl'[43], for example, has been the subject of a number of studies all of which focus on the lyrical content, spectacular resistance of its musicians and fans, feminist politics and its links to Punk culture (e.g. Leonard, 1997; Kearney, 1998; Piano, 2003; Schilt, 2004). These studies overlook the music genre characteristics of Riot Grrrl and the fan attachments to the music genre. Similarly, with the rise of post-subcultural studies that emphasize the movement between cultures (Bennett, 1999) and the playful adoption of stylistic identities (Muggleton, 2000); the importance of music in individuals' lives and remaining in those lives is disregarded. A study that does consider music is Malbon's (1999) *Clubbing*. He illustrates that the experience of clubbing is an emotional one linked to music, dancing and the drug ecstasy. His study gives some insight into the clubber's experience of music in the club but does not explore the clubber's personal and everyday relationship with music. There could be potential benefits in considering individual attachments to music to reveal the nature of subcultural identification. Music genre,

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[43] Riot Grrrl is a music genre created with Punk riffs and a combination of female vocal, including screams, and expresses feminist politics. It is also predominantly a female Punk movement.

Hesmondhalgh (2005; 2007) argues, may be a more suitable starting point than concepts such as subculture in theorizing the relationship between social groups and music styles, and specifically musical forms of affiliation. For instance, Toynbee (2000) claims that genre can be seen to express a music culture's interests and views, and can be seen to be a point at which a culture is centred around, that "communities in modern societies may be represented by genres of music and find identity in particular styles" (Toynbee, 2000: 122). This approach, however, only views genre as a "starting point" to understand the relationship between music and the social (Hesmondhalgh, 2005: 32). Considering the nuances of music genre alongside the subcultural members' attachments to the music has the potential, nonetheless, to reveal something of the larger subculture.

Little research has placed music in the realm of everyday life (DeNora 2000: 2003) or treated music fandom as an everyday cultural or social activity (Jenson, 1992; Vroomen, 2002). In her book, *Music in Everyday Life*, DeNora (2000) discusses the varied ways in which music features in our lives, such as the encountering of music in shops, and our controlled use of music to affect our moods and energy. The presence of music in the background and foreground in the everyday lives of youths has been considered by Laughey (2006) who argues that music is a cultural resource for young people that has routine contexts such as being part of school life. The same ideas have not, however, been applied to participants in music subcultures. There is little attention given to the individual, everyday use of music by the subcultural

member that may reveal something of his/her attachment and identification. Kahn-Harris (2004) has spoken about the mundane, everyday aspects of Extreme Metal scene members' lives, particularly the balancing of scenic and non-scenic life, such as jobs and the collecting of music. However, he does not mention the use of Extreme Metal music in scene members' everyday lives. One might consider that listening to music could be used to transgress mundanity, give pleasurable feeling, and could create attachment and rejuvenate commitment to the music subculture. Through a consideration of the everyday qualities involving the daily (even mundane) listening to and enjoyment of music, one may learn something greater of the relationship between music and the individual and his/her attachments, investments and commitments to music cultures.

I have argued that the subcultural studies related to the CCCS and their concern with spectacular style and symbolic working class resistance overlooked the importance of music to the music subculture. Considering the everyday uses of music goes some way in highlighting the importance music plays in many people's lives, but the subcultural use of music and affective attachments to music still remain under-researched.

Music Fandom

Studies of fandom share similarities with the study of subculture, due to their considerations of collective fan values and hierarchies, but such studies have broadened the type of collectives being focused on, that include those centred

on music, celebrity, film, television programme and comics. Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) illustrate the different levels of involvement of the fan audience through making the distinction between the figures of the enthusiast, fan and cultist, with the cultist (or subculturalist) being more involved and organised than the fan. Fandom is, therefore, considered as a continuum with differing levels of involvement, enthusiasm, commitment and collective organisation. I now go on to address the key debates in fan studies, particularly in relation to the fan of popular music. I examine the construction of the fan, and popular music/cultures placement as a 'low' cultural form and consider the studies to have emerged that highlight the existence of the 'high' cultural characteristics of hierarchy within fan communities. The fan is defined via his/her attachment to the object of fandom. I highlight, however, that fan studies place emphasis on music artist fandom whilst giving inadequate attention to the fan relationship with music, and its affect.

The Popular Music Fan

A reflection on Adorno's perception of popular music highlights many of the debates that have emerged in the study of fandom, particularly the situating of fandom as low culture and the positioning of the fan as a 'passive consumer': Adorno (1991) claims that popular music is a symptom of modernity (characterised by Capitalism, cultural commodification and authoritarian political rule) and consequently, has a distinct role in society. Popular music is considered a product of 'the culture industry' that is characterised by its standardisation and pseudo-individualisation which can be seen, for example,

in the standardised jazz improvisation (Adorno and Horkheimer; 1993). Adorno argues that popular music's comforts and catharsis enables people to resign themselves to the unfulfilling reality of capitalist society. He therefore assumes the popular music consumer to be passive; closing off the possibility of consumers being social actors who make meaning out of popular music (Bennett, 2000; DeNora, 2003). Cultural representations of fandom have mirrored Adorno's notion of the consumer of mass culture by presenting the fan as a passive consumer, taken advantage of, or manipulated by, the music industry and the media (Jenson, 1992). Emphasis has been placed upon the obsessed individual and the hysterical crowd, and the pathologization of fans as irrational females and male loners. Lewis (1992) and Jenson (1992) challenge such representations, arguing that fans are not manipulated but capable of actively discriminating and creating meanings. The notion of the polysemic text is used by Fiske (1989) to argue that fan texts have more than one meaning and reading and that fans are active: they are able to construct alternative readings to the general audience.[44] Such a view is illustrated in Radway's (1984) study of female romance fans' use of romance novels to better assert their own rights. Romance reading could be considered to be a reflection of the readers' contentment with their lives as women, but Radway (1984) illustrates that romance reading was fuelled by dissatisfaction within the women's lives. Various studies of the popular music fan also place attention upon the values that popular music artists/celebrities embody and communicate. For instance, Fiske (1989) argues that Madonna's image and

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[44] This use of 'polysemy' was different from Dyer's (1980) placement of stardom as a 'structured polysemy'. Dyer argues movie stars' reputations create a polysemy of meanings, but with certain ones being emphasized.

videos offer young female fans self-understandings that break from patriarchal models. Such studies focus on empowerment, yet the fan may not only be actively using the object of fandom in order to gain or assert power, it could be claimed that music fandom also offers the potential experiences of pleasure and feeling.

Adorno (1991) makes the distinction between serious music and popular music, thus situating 'high' art as mass culture's opposite. 'Serious' music therefore offers a challenge to the 'culture industry' by renouncing the commodity form of standardisation. There continues to remain a distinction between the aficionado of 'high' culture and the fan of 'low' popular culture. This aesthetic hierarchy, places the music of 'high' culture in the realm of 'serious music' and educated choice, as Jenson (1992: 21) explains, "the Opera buff and the Heavy Metal fan are differentiated not only on the basis of the status of their desired object, but also on the supposed nature of their attachment". The aficionado of 'high' culture (the Opera buff) is assumed to have intellectual detachment, whilst the fan of 'low' culture (Heavy Metal) is assumed to be fanatical. Popular culture, according to Fiske (1989), exists in opposition to 'high' culture and the consumption of popular culture or 'the culture of everyday life' is part of the struggle of disempowered groups. Despite such distinctions made between low/high, popular/serious, and inauthentic/authentic, it is claimed that one cannot truly draw distinctions between the two (Hesmondhalgh and Negus, 2002). If such a distinction did

exist, then it would present a problem in the researching of authenticity in 'inauthentic' 'low' cultural forms such as Dance music (Huq, 2002).

According to Fiske (1992), fans create their own fan culture via their own systems of production and distribution, which he calls a 'shadow cultural economy'. Such cultures have their own form of 'popular cultural capital', which provide fans with certain forms of privilege and distinction. Fandom therefore "offers ways of filling cultural lack and provide the social prestige and self-esteem that go with cultural capital" (Fiske, 1992: 33). The fan is able to resolve problems of status through developing new norms and systems of privilege. This 'popular cultural capital' is similar to Thornton's (1995) 'subcultural capital', through which members of club cultures display their status in the subcultural hierarchy. Vroomen (2002; 2004), also adopts such a notion of capital to illustrate how older female fans of Kate Bush exerted authority/status over younger fans and possessed a sense of authenticity through their possession of capitals linked to their fan knowledge. What is significant in these studies of collective fandom is that hierarchy and prestige gained from popular/subcultural capital is therefore comparable to a performance of 'high' culture within popular/'low' culture.

Late-modernity and our movement towards postmodern times has been characterised by the claim that 'high' and 'low' culture are now harder to distinguish:

> If we examine definitions of postmodernism, we find an
>
> emphasis upon the effacement of the boundary between art and
>
> mass/popular culture, a general stylistic promiscuity and a
>
> playful mixing of codes.
>
> (Featherstone, 1991: 65)

Such a blurring of the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' culture is shown in Jancovich's (2002) study of cult movie fans. He illustrates that notions of 'high' culture exist within cult fans descriptions of their fandom and their sense of exclusivity despite their consumption of 'low' cultural forms associated with violence, pornography and kitsch. Although perceived a 'low' cultural form, Metal, its fans and culture are not so neatly defined. Extreme Metal fans are of mixed class, and educational backgrounds. In addition, importance is placed upon the musical virtuosity and classical music influence within Metal, which according to Walser (1993) merges the most and least prestigious musical discourses. The boundaries between 'high' and 'low' are therefore blurred when one considers certain fan cultures.

The Fan Relationship and Attachment

Fan studies regularly concentrate upon the fan's relationship with his/her object of fandom, particularly the celebrity or the music artist that the fan is assumed as 'attached' to. Collective music fandom is researched via the consideration of individual fan attachments to the artist. For instance, in his study on Bruce Springsteen fans, Cavicchi (1998) claims that the fan

community is created through shared attachment to the figure of Bruce Springsteen and what he represents to them. Similarly, in studies that have considered Madonna, it has been argued that there is a tendency to concentrate upon the powerful feminist values that could be attached to Madonna's image and the songs, placing Madonna as "the post modern feminist heroine" (Kaplan, 1987). It is therefore the fan attraction and attachment to the celebrity and the values that they supposedly portray that are focused upon rather than the music.

Fans are perceived to be attracted to celebrity due to a variety of reasons such as sexual attraction, personal values or mass media acclaim (Rojek, 2001). According to Sandvoss (2005), the fan's attachment to an object of fandom, such as celebrity, is narcissistic. He argues that fandom is "narcissistic self-reflection" between the fan and his/her object of fandom:

> The different meanings constructed in the reading of fan texts are thus shaped through fans' self-recognition in the text rather than through any inherent semiotic of the text itself. The text thus functions as a mirror.
>
> (Sandvoss, 2005: 108)

This presents a problem when considering music fandom, because fan attachments are not only related to the music artist but the music itself. Music may function as a mirror to the self but in a less narcissistic way, for example

DeNora (2006) has described music as a device for memory retrieval, used to relive and (re)constitute past experience. Music may also reflect our mood and feelings (DeNora 2000; 2003). Yet, when fan attachments to music are considered, the artist appears central to the interpretation. Cavicchi (1998: 135), for example, talks about the music of Bruce Springsteen only in relation to the fans' view of the celebrity figure communicating with them:

> Fans' 'listening' then is not simply hearing and interpreting a
> song but an ongoing process of deepening the connection
> between their hearing and their lives. Fans always have the
> feeling that Bruce is reading their minds because 'their minds'
> are active elements in constructing and interpreting the music.

The fans' connection here is not related to the power of music itself but to their self-projection and reflection. In contrast, according to Grossberg (1992), fandom is the domain of affect and mood. Grossberg (1992: 56) argues that the relationship between audience and text is active and that they must be considered together. He characterises fan sensibility (the relationship between fan and text) in relation to 'affect':

> The fans relationship to cultural texts operates in the domain of
> affect and mood. Affect is perhaps the most difficult plane of
> our lives to define, not merely, because it is even less
> necessarily tied to meaning and pleasure, but also because it is,

in some sense, the most mundane aspect of everyday life. Affect

is not the same as either emotions or desires. Affect is closely

tied to what we often describe as the 'feeling of life'.

Music genre fandom in particular, could be considered in such a way. It could be argued that music genre fandom is not only about narcissism or sexual attraction to the music artist but rather the physical and affective responses to sound and participation in the performances and activities of the collective. Researching the fandom of music therefore is open to a different approach that considers music genre. Music genre fandom is distinctive from artist fandom due to the focus on fans having a distinct relationship with music.

The critique of fan theory highlights that the figure of the fan and the nature of his/her attachment has been stereotyped and that the distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture has narrowed what can be focused upon. The drive of fandom is often placed in relation to empowerment, yet the affective attachments and investments remain largely uncharted. I have highlighted that fan culture can be situated as both 'low' and 'high' culture and that the distinct relationship between fan and music genre is in need of address. Unlike the study of subculture and fandom, the fields of musicology and psychology have gone some way to focusing on the character of music genres and the individual's relationship with music. I now go on to consider these areas of research and contend that focusing on the individual relationship with music could have valuable influence on the study of music cultures.

Researching Music and its Affect

Due to the inadequate attention given to the music fan/subculturalist's relationship with music, I now turn to consider how popular music has been researched within the sociology of music, musicology and social psychology. Although not addressing the collective nuances of music and identity, such studies place the character of music genre as significant and open up the possibility of considering the individual's attachments to music and his/her affective responses and feelings associated with music.

Music Studies

Popular music can be considered as a cultural form, it reflects on and influences politics and cultures, and can have different interpretations placed on its sounds and its impact. Wicke (1990) describes rock songs as cultural texts, mediums through which cultural meanings and values circulate. According to Frith (1996b), the sociology of music has been preoccupied with drawing connections between sound structures and social structures; it does not consider how music reflects people, but how it produces them. The sociology of music places music as a social phenomenon, considering both producers and consumers of music; musicology, on the other hand, is concerned with studying the producers and composers of music rather than audience (Street, 1993). The field of musicology is primarily concerned with studying the musical object, with discussions of rhythm, harmony, and melody. Moore (2001) argues that in researching Rock music, attention should be given to the

sounds themselves: the musical text. Yet, Brackett (1995) highlights that much debate exists around text and context in interpreting popular music. He argues that "there is not necessarily one way of interpreting popular music" because different types of popular music use different types of rhetoric, musical complexity and familiarity, and draw on different senses of history and tradition. When context is considered, musical structures have been situated as indicators of the society that produced them (I have already highlighted the treatment of Death Metal music, linking the aggression of the music with an apparent dissatisfaction with society). Walser's (1993) musicological study of Heavy Metal considers music as a cultural form, through a musical and cultural analysis. He argues that the Heavy Metal genre helped forge a distinct form of masculinity through both its sound and performance. Walser's (1993) research still studies music as a material piece, he examines the musical scores of several Heavy Metal songs in conjunction with observations of Heavy Metal performance; but the relationship between listener and music is largely absent. Musicology's approach to music and the auditory would benefit from considering music as a cultural form and the audience response. Likewise, such a focus on music (as within musicology) could bring a consideration of the auditory into studies of subculture and fandom in which focus on music culture has almost exclusively been on interpersonal/social relations and spectacular practices.

The individual's relationship with music has been most prominently researched in the field of psychology, where emphasis has been placed upon music and cognition and the role of music in constructing the self. In social psychology, music has been considered to express identity, and studied in relation to the everyday use of music and listening situations (Hargreaves et al. 2002). There is a distinct recognition that music is used to produce affective states and to present something of ourselves: "we use it [music] not only to regulate our own everyday moods and behaviours, but also to present ourselves to others in the way we prefer" (Hargreaves et al., 2002: 1). Some studies place music's meaning as immanent, assuming one is affected by it without control. For example, music taste has been associated with distinct nuances of personality, Dollinger (1993) illustrates music taste reflects personality traits, with extraversion and high arousal properties seen in the fans of Jazz and excitement seeking in fans of Hard Rock. Music is also argued to influence societal behaviour, such as the association of an increased risk of fans of Metal music with suicide (Martin et al., 1993). It is not only extremes of behaviour and personality that music is claimed to influence, some studies have illustrated music's influence upon consumers. North and Hargreaves (1997; 1997b) highlight that music is used to structure conduct in the public and a device for focusing consumer conduct. In cognitive psychology, music research centres on internalized rules, the strategies employed in musical behaviour and the emotional effects of music. The relationship between music and emotion has been approached with an emphasis upon people's cognitive

responses. Sloboda (2005) claims the reason many people engage with music as performers and listeners is that it has power to evoke or enhance valued emotional states. Likewise, drawing on their experiment in which participants recorded their daily music experiences, Sloboda and O'Niell (2001) highlight that music listened to in an everyday context has emotional functions. Research in psychology has therefore considered the use and impact of music in a variety of areas, drawing attention to its use in the construction of identity and its links with personality, conduct and emotion.

In addition to emotion, music also produces affective states, moods and feeling. Indeed, Hargreaves and North (1999) claim that the key social functions of music for the individual are the management of interpersonal relations, mood and self-identity. Additionally, DeNora (2000) has highlighted music's potential to be a resource for doing, thinking and feeling and that a distinct quality of music is its power to produce feeling:

> [M]usic's powers extend beyond its capacity to serve as a
> paradigm. Its temporal dimension, the fact that it is a non-
> verbal, non-depictive medium, and that it is a physical presence
> whose vibrations can be felt, all enhance its ability to work at
> non-cognitive or subconscious levels.
>
> (DeNora, 2000: 159)

This highlights that an individual's relationship with music may be related to the feeling and affective states that it gives the listener. Music has power in creating an affective reaction that, according to Sacks (2007), can be linked to the neurological connection between brains and music, with music being distinct from language and embedded deeply into the human condition:

> We humans are a musical species no less than a linguistic one. This takes many different forms. All of us (with very few exceptions) can perceive music, perceive tones, timbre, pitch, intervals, melodic contours, harmony and (perhaps most elementally) rhythm. We integrate all of these and "construct" music in our minds using many different parts of the brain. And to this largely unconscious structural appreciation of music is added an often intense and profound emotional reaction to music.
>
> (Sacks, 2007: xi)

Our relationship with music is, therefore, related to how we perceive it, experience it physically and emotionally, invest in it and feel attached to it.

The study of popular music across the disciplines of sociology of music and musicology place the character of music as central to the interpretations of its use. Such approaches to researching music place music genre characteristics (particularly sound structures) as a key element of their effect and consider

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them to reflect something of the society/cultures that consume them. Through drawing on the distinct relationship people have with music genre, therefore, one may understand how music may have impact upon the way in which attachments are imagined and made. Music offers a distinct experience. The study of the individual and music, particularly in psychology, has highlighted the relationship between music and identity; music and personality; music and conduct; music and emotion and, in particular, music and feeling that can further influence research on music culture.

Conclusion

This chapter has given consideration to how Metal, music culture and fandom have been researched, in so doing; it has highlighted that within these studies little attention has been given to the music genre, its everyday use, and attachments to it. I have argued that research on music collectives can take influence from various disciplines, through a consideration of the nuances of music, the fan relationship with music, and the affective attachment linked to being a fan of music.

I began with a consideration of the academic research on Metal music and culture. I highlighted a previous lack of attention to Metal subculture and a largely negative focus upon adolescent alienation amongst its fans. There are, however, several studies that focus upon the collective character and value of Metal (including Extreme Metal), particularly its distinct spectacular practices, shared values and fan relations. These Metal studies have therefore begun to

bridge the gap between subcultural studies and Metal culture. I have drawn upon the key subcultural characteristics identified by these studies, and aim to develop this field of research via a consideration of fan attachments to and relationships with Extreme Metal music and subculture.

The chapter has also highlighted that studies of music subcultures give music inadequate attention. The consideration of the everyday uses of music go some way to highlight the importance of music in individuals' lives but the subcultural use of music and affective attachments to music still remain under-researched. Within fandom studies, the affective attachments and investments that can be related to fandom remain invisible. Fan studies have focused primarily on the relationship between fan and artist. I have argued that fan studies fail to consider the distinct relationship between fan and music genre, which is in need of address. This chapter has finally considered that music research in other academic fields can influence an interdisciplinary approach to researching music genre fandom and music subculture. I have shown that the field of musicology places importance upon music itself, and have argued that a consideration of the auditory and the nuances of music genre can have wider impact in the fields of subculture and fandom. In the field of psychology, studies of music have illustrated music's important relationship with identity, personality, conduct and emotion. From this overview of existing academic research, I have illustrated that music genre and feeling are in need of consideration in researching music culture, and further justifies the focus of this thesis.

In the next chapter, I proceed to consider the study of subculture in greater detail, arguing that subcultural theory continues to have value for researching music culture. I go on to re-theorize subculture as a 'performative feeling community', which serves to consider the deeper modes of identifications and attachments that embed people within subculture.

Chapter 3

Music Culture as Subculture: Revising Subcultural Theory

In Chapter 2, I discussed the fields in which music culture has been researched and highlighted their failings in considering fan/music culture participants' attachment to and relationship with music. In particular, I illustrated the need for the consideration of music genre, our everyday relationships with music and its attached affect. Several recent studies on music and youth culture have argued that young people's lives and diverse identities are misrepresented by a focus on subcultures (Hesmondhalgh, 2005; Laughey, 2006). Although many people have never been involved in a music culture or have not claimed collective music identities, for others it is a significant characteristic and identification in their lives. To identify collectively is an important interaction in society (Jenkins, 2008), and the study of music subculture offers a window into the structured interactions and performances in which people participate in order to identify with a particular lifestyle. This chapter concentrates upon the study of subculture to both contextualise my research and illustrate that subcultural theory continues to have value for researching music culture.

This chapter considers subcultural research and theory. It reflects on the process through which subcultural theory has developed from its association with deviance, and class resistance to subsequent debates that have since arisen around the concept of 'post-subculture'. I argue that the term subculture remains a valuable concept in considerations of collective identities and I

highlight the value of a subcultural approach. The chapter then introduces my revision of subcultural theory to accommodate notions of structured hierarchy with performance and interaction. I re-theorize subculture as a culture based around taste, learning, performance, speech and feeling, and situate music subcultures as performative 'feeling communities' that can tell us not only about the spectacular dimensions of music fandom but also about its deeper modes of identifications and attachments.

Subculture

Cultural formations and the media presently use the term subculture in a non-specific, non-academic way, so much so, Bennett (1999: 599) observes, that "subculture' has arguably become little more than a convenient 'catch-all' term for any aspect of social life in which young people, style and music intersect". The wide use of the term subculture does not necessarily mean that the concept should be discarded. Subcultural theory has value in considering cultures affiliated around music as structured spaces in which people perform distinct shared practices and display collective values.

Here, I consider the development and use of subculture as a concept. The concept of subculture is particularly associated with its use within two disciplinary schools: the Chicago school of Sociology and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS). These two approaches differ in their methodological and theoretical approaches: the Chicago School was primarily associated with ethnography and Symbolic Interactionism; the

CCCS with semiotics and neo-Marxism. I argue that post-subcultural critiques of subculture have largely concentrated on the CCCS's use of the term, which has also involved an oversimplified and partial interpretation of the work of the 'Birmingham school', as it is often termed. Although the use of subculture can be criticised, I argue that the concept of subculture still has value, and a subcultural perspective can still inform current work on people's relationship to music and identity.

The Chicago School, Subculture and Deviance

The concept of subculture has its origins in the perspectives on culture and society that arose from the Chicago School of Sociology. Chicago School sociologists had a particular interest in urban sociology and also in explaining the social and cultural context of deviance (Park, 1925/1984). Their studies centred on the diverse cultures and urban groups of Chicago and employed an ethnographic approach, particularly through participant observation, to study and present their distinct social worlds.

In his study *The City*, Park (1925/1984) describes the city as a place where social groups can find their own moral milieu. Several of the Chicago school sociologists viewed subcultures as having morals, behaviours and norms that deviated from those of the dominant culture. For instance, Whyte's (1943/1993) *Street Corner Society* depicts a distinct cultural world through descriptions of the deviant behaviour of a gang of youths on the streets of Boston. In many Chicago school studies, deviance (and indeed subcultural

activity) is perceived as a reaction to poor socio-economic conditions, and also viewed as an alternative solution. Merton's (1957) model of means and goals, illustrates that groups who lacked the means to acquire desired material goals found deviant solutions to achieve those goals. Influenced by the Chicago School, Cohen's (1955) research on delinquent boys similarly highlights the manner in which youth collectively resolved problems of status and adjustment through developing new values and norms that were deviant from the rest of society. In effect, he argued that being part of a subculture served to normalise deviant behaviours.

Several Chicago school studies identified subcultures as non-conformist cultures with distinct behaviours and ways of life. In his ethnography of 'taxi-dancers', who were young females hired out by Chicago dance halls to male partners, Cressey (1932/1971) presents the dance hall as having its own language and way of life. He describes taxi-dancer careers in and around the dance hall that culminate in movement to another hall. The study describes the dance hall having its own hierarchy and shared norms that exist outside mainstream society. Subcultural hierarchy is also a key focus of Becker's (1963) ethnography of the social world of jazz musicians. He illustrated jazz musicians' participation in a subculture with shared values, practices and interactions. Becker argued that the musicians in his study were taking part in a process of self-segregation and self-labelling. Their interactions, particularly their 'hip' behaviours, indicated they were 'insiders' and, as a result, separated them from the 'squares' (or outsiders). Becker also described the use of

symbolic expressions such as slang, which aided such segregation. His study located music as an activity of subculture, linking the distinct characteristics of group identifications with shared music tastes. Polsky's (1967) ethnography of the 'Village Beat world' also links subculture with music culture, non-conformity and shared behaviour. The study considers the collective practices, values and identifications of 'Beats'. For example, Polsky (1967: 147) argued that 'Beats' used inconspicuous badges of identity, such as beard length to identify one another and "promote a 'we' feeling". The Chicago School ethnographies, therefore, theorized subculture as a cultural world with its own values, distinct behaviours and notions of authentic membership and hierarchy.

Several of the Chicago School sociologists defined subcultures as deviant from the established norm. In contrast, Gordon (1947/1997) argues that subcultures are 'worlds within a world': they are located as a sub-section of the whole culture. Subcultures could, therefore, be institutional rather than urban and might not always be deviant. Due to the focus on urban ethnography, the subcultures researched by the Chicago sociologists appear to be motivated by the poor conditions of the city. A later study that differs here is Irwin's (1977) *Scenes*, which describes the surfing and hippie subcultures. Irwin considers subcultures to be social worlds with a shared perspective, and their own argot. His study indicates that subcultural identities can be a result of lifestyle choices. Irwin recognises that subcultural participants are increasingly conscious of their activities and identities being subcultural, through the shared, popular language of the 'scene'. As a result, Irwin (1977: 23) argues

that those participating in a scene perform a subcultural identity, "self-consciously presenting him-or herself in front of audiences". The study highlights that subcultural members can make conscious choices, and that subcultures are also shaped by wider society.

Influenced by the Chicago School focus upon subcultures, studies emerged in the UK during the 1970s that emphasised wider society's influence upon subcultural participation. In his study of drug-takers in Britain, Young (1971) developed the notion of 'outsider labelling', arguing that the moral panics about drugs in wider society had influence upon drug-takers' attitudes. Through the external labelling of drug-takers as deviant, the drug-takers came to view themselves as deviant. The notion of moral panic was also a key focus in Cohen's (1980/1972) study of the clashes between the Mods and Rockers in 1960s Britain. This study situated the mass media as the creators of the rivalry between Mods and Rockers and as the source of the moral panics surrounding the conflicts. This served to escalate the problem, making such music identities and their clashes even more appealing to young people. Music-based subcultures were shaped by the mass media which also constructed them as deviant. The involvement of the media therefore, demonstrated that subcultures were not separate from the wider society, but were influenced by and in interaction with it.

The Chicago school largely presented subcultures as non-conformist or deviant cultures that had shared practices, values and morals; resting on notions of

insider identity, authenticity and hierarchy. Although many of the subcultures researched were related to deviant criminal activities, others focused on shared non-conformity to social norms and the wider culture. While several of the Chicago School studies of subculture concentrated upon those emerging from the poor conditions of the city, Irwin's (1977) highlighted that lifestyle choice and circulated ideas about subculture also influenced participation and interaction in subculture. Furthermore, the influence of the Chicago school on Young (1971) and Cohen (1972) began a consideration of the influence of wider society and mass media on the perception of and participation in subcultures. I now turn to the development of the concept of subculture by the CCCS, which associated subculture with working class resistance, and consider the subsequent critiques of the concept of subculture, which predominantly centre on the CCCS's body of work.

The Birmingham CCCS, Subculture and Resistance

The concept of subculture is largely associated with its use by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1970s. The CCCS focused on the category of 'youth' and emphasised a neo-Marxist perspective on social class, in which subculture was interpreted as a symbolic expression of working class resistance. During this period, many CCCS texts employed semiotic analysis; reading the signs of subculture to understand social identity, whilst others took an ethnographic approach to investigate the whole way of life of specific subcultures.

The CCCS theorized subculture as a sub-section of a working class 'parent culture'. Subcultures were considered identifiably different in shape and structure from their parent culture but continued to exist within and coexist with the culture of the class from which they arose (Clarke et al., 1976/2006). According to Phil Cohen (1972/1980), the generational conflict within parent cultures and youth's increased affiliation with consumer society signified the disintegration of traditional working class community. He viewed subcultures as offering a 'magical' solution to this problem since they could provide solidarity. In the CCCS text, *Resistance through Rituals* (Hall and Jefferson, 1976/2006), subcultures are theorized as imaginary ways to solve the problems created by the material and social conditions in which working class youth found themselves. The various essays in the text identify subcultures as providing alternative value systems and status. Subcultures are 'imaginary' solutions, because although a subculture can symbolise class struggles, participating in a subculture does not change class positions. This is further demonstrated in Willis' ethnography (1977) *Learning to Labour*, which argues that the working class lads' in his study participated in counter-school culture, but this only served to prepare them for working class, menial jobs. Although Willis did not couch his analysis in terms of subcultural theory, his study illustrates the distinct shared characteristics of subcultural identity, describing the (deviant) values, speech, interactions and activities of working class lads' counter-school culture. Subculture was still characterised by activities, values, interactions, territories and material artefacts that differentiated them from wider culture (Clarke et al., 1976/2006).

Several of the subcultures studied by the CCCS are clearly visible, object-defined and music-affiliated groups such as Mods, Rockers, Punks and Skinheads. In his consideration of 'Teds', Jefferson (1976/2006) focuses on the group-mindedness of Teddy boys, arguing that they possess shared working class values, style, and aspirations, and violently participate in defending their style and therefore status. Jefferson also highlights the Teds' symbolic challenge to hegemony through style as seen in the Teddy boys' adoption of the middle class Edwardian suit as a symbolic way to negotiate the material conditions of their existence. Several CCCS studies consider the subcultural use of objects and symbols to be central to an understanding of subcultures. Willis' (1978) participant observation studies of hippies and motorbike boys, describes the outward signs of these cultures. Applying the term 'homology' to subculture, Willis refers to the inter-play between a group and particular items such as the motorbike, drugs or music, which serves to express the way of life of a subcultural group. According to Hebdige (1979: 18), style is "pregnant with significance" and the tensions between dominant and subordinate groups are reflected in the surfaces of subculture, particularly in the mundane objects that make up subcultural style. Hebdige uses the term 'bricolage' to refer to the appropriation of cultural items by subcultural groups to communicate new meanings in which such items are adapted for uses that were not officially intended. Subcultural styles, he claims, have signifying power, posing the possibility of "semiotic guerrilla warfare", spectacular resistance that can be seen, for instance, in the signified chaos of Punk style. These new meanings, he

argues, are vulnerable to incorporation into the mainstream. At the point at which they are adopted outside the subculture, they lose signifying power; they are produced on a mass scale, are codified, made comprehensible and become profitable merchandise. Although recognising the ambiguous relationship subcultures have with consumption (he recognises that subcultures are concerned with consumption and communicate through commodities), Hebdige positions subculture as under threat from commercial exploitation and mainstream culture. As I have already noted in Chapter 2, Brown (2007) argues that Heavy Metal is subcultural, despite its contentious relationship with the mainstream and commodification of Metal culture. By not accepting that some subcultures may participate in mass consumption, Brown argues that the CCCS neglected specific youth cultures in the development of the subcultural approach. Hebdige (1979) also claims that the media poses a threat to subculture by trivialising it or characterising it as threatening. Yet, Thornton (1995), stresses that the media are never separate from subcultures and that subcultures consume media and take part in creating it.

The CCCS approach to researching subculture is limited by its focus on working class resistance. Indeed, the approach has been criticised for romanticising working class resistance and presenting a "fetishism of resistance" (Kellner, 1995: 38). Such a preoccupation with resistance refuses to acknowledge the possibility that participation in subculture could take place for pleasure or fun (Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004). Such readings also place the academic interpretation of subcultural meanings above those participating in

the subculture (Clarke, 1981; Redhead, 1997). Researchers place their own interpretation of resistance and style upon the subculture without considering how subcultural members might interpret their actions. As I have highlighted in Chapter 2, academic preoccupation with symbolic resistance in subcultural theory has led to a relative neglect of detailed consideration of the meanings of music for members of subcultures.

The CCCS analysis of the wider political and cultural significance of youth subcultures emphasised the dimension of social class. They therefore, tended to focus on working class (and predominantly male, white, heterosexual) subcultures in order to investigate this phenomenon in greater depth. The CCCS failed to consider the possibilities of class mobility, or that subcultures could have a large middle class membership, for instance, as a result of the participation of students (Frith and Horne, 1989; Longhurst, 1995). Moreover, one cannot assume that a popular music genre such as Punk only involved working class participants (Clarke, 1981; Laing, 1985). Opinion did vary within the CCCS on the relationships between subcultures and class. Cohen (1980) argued that the middle classes could not produce subculture because subcultures were produced by a subordinate culture, not a dominant one. In contrast, Clarke et al. (1976) claimed that youth, style and music cultures that are identifiable as middle class are less likely to fit the model of subcultural resistance, instead they tend to be "diffuse counter-culture milieu" that are less group-centred, and more individualised. One example of middle class subcultural resistance is Webster's (1976/2006) essay on 'Communes'

included in the CCCS text *Resistance through Rituals*. Communes are described as an alternative institution of counter-culture made up of urban middle class youth. They confirm the resistance thesis because they symbolise opposition to the middle class parent culture.

The CCCS approach to subculture has limited relevance not only in relation to class, but also due to its focus on white, male youth (Clarke, 1981). The CCCS primarily focused upon white subcultures, with a narrow focus in relation to ethnicity. As Huq (2006) has highlighted, despite the emergence of a few texts that addressed 'race', in particular *The Empire Strikes Back* (CCCS, 1982), such studies tended to construct black youth as victims of racism or objectify them as a source of style. For example, Hebdige (1976/2006), highlights white male skinheads' adoption of West Indian music and style as a form of working class resistance. The CCCS also primarily focused on male subculture. Within the CCCS, McRobbie and Garber (1976/2006) criticised subcultural studies for the absence of accounts of female involvement. McRobbie and Garber (1976/2006) identify the academic focus upon the public street corner and spectacular activities as a key reason for the emphasis on male behaviour and argue that females were more likely to experience girls' culture in the private domestic sphere of a 'bedroom culture'. Whilst recognising the differing dynamics of participation, particularly girls' marginalised and sexualised roles in male-dominated subculture, they did not consider the important roles and subcultural activities females took part in, in the public arena and within music culture such as Punk. The CCCS also characterised subculture as specifically a

youth culture. A focus on youth has meant that the existence of older subcultural participants has been neglected. An emphasis upon youth bears little resemblance to the actual existence of varying age in music consumption, musicians and music culture participants (Vroomen, 2002; Bennett, 2006). It is important to note, however, that the CCCS were not claiming that all subcultures were youth cultures. Clarke et al (1976/2006) clearly stated that the concern of the book *Resistance through Rituals, w*as on tightly defined groups of youth, but that the concept of subculture was not limited to youth.

The CCCS work on subculture is not as unified as some critiques imply. The school's work has been criticised by researchers in what has become known as 'post-subcultural' studies, but the identified weaknesses are based on a partial overview of the CCCS body of work on youth culture (Blackman, 2005; Gelder, 2005; Shildrick and Macdonald, 2006). Post-subcultural scholars have argued that the CCCS approach has been limited to spectacular subcultures and, in particular, subcultural style (e.g. Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004). Yet, such a critique does not recognise that some of the CCCS studies did present the unspectacular nuances of subcultures. In his essay 'Doing nothing', Corrigan (1976/2006) discusses the continued existence of 'street corner society'. He argues that many working class youths take part in the shared activity of being present on the street, and passing time, therefore, 'doing nothing' together. In Willis' (1978) study of counter school culture, it is the shared speech, and daily activities of the lads that situate them as a collective culture. McRobbie and Garber (1976/2006) consider girls' participation in

subculture and popular culture, identifying the bedroom as an area of activity that characterises 'teeny bopper' culture. The unspectacular, private domain of the bedroom is where girls symbolically resist authority and control in their lives. It is, therefore, not only spectacular resistance that concerned the CCCS; rather the shared activities of youths that reinforced their identity against the parent culture and characterised their participation in subculture.

Another post-subcultural critique of the CCCS and of the wider concept of subculture is that subculture implies tightly bounded and coherent social groups. For instance, Bennett (1999: 603) argues that, as a concept, subculture does not allow for temporary identifications:

> The term 'subculture' is also deeply problematic in that it imposes rigid lines of division over forms of association which may, in effect, be rather more fleeting, and in many cases arbitrary, that the concept of subculture, with its connotations of coherence and solidarity allows for.

Post-subcultural theory focuses on the fluid and fragmentary aspects of identities and cultures in the postmodern world. Yet, the CCCS studies did not imply that subcultures were fixed or imposed rigid forms of division. In fact, Clarke et al. (1976/2006: 4) argue subcultures are varied: "subcultures [...] take shape around the distinctive activities and focal concerns of groups. They can be loosely or tightly bounded". Moreover, Clarke et al. (1976/2006) later note

that people may move in and out of one or several subcultures. Similarly, the Chicago school approach to subculture did not imply subcultures and participation within them were fixed. Although many studies were ethnographies of cohesive gangs, subcultural identities were also considered in relation to careers (Cressey, 1932/1971), performance and lifestyle choice (Irwin, 1977).

Although subcultural studies can be critiqued for their preoccupation with deviance and class resistance to explain collective identities, particular aspects of the previous use of subculture can be drawn on. The Chicago School studies of subculture described groups who had shared notions of authenticity, hierarchy, practices and speech acts. Similarly, within the CCCS, subcultures were presented as having shared values, behaviours, speech, style and objects that characterised them as distinct cultural groupings. These studies show that subcultures may have spectacular and unspectacular practices that are located in the public sphere, such as street corners, schools or clubs and private spaces, such as bedrooms. Subcultural studies describe forms of solidarity and consider groups with distinct values and behaviours that differentiate them from the mainstream. Rather than being seen as subordinate to dominant culture, subcultures can be considered as non-normative: "subcultures are groups of people that are in some way represented by non-normative and/or marginal through their particular interests and practices, through what they are, what they do and where they do it" (Gelder, 2005: 1). Subculture, therefore, may be used to represent distinct collectives and their practice. Before addressing

subculture's possible continued use, I now consider the post-subcultural

movement that has critiqued subculture and introduced new concepts that

promote a postmodern understanding of contemporary youth cultures.

After Subculture

Since the 1980s, there has been movement away from the use of the term

subculture. Youth cultural studies continued to focus upon youth music

cultures, but were characterised by a focus upon diversity and consumption

(Griffin, 1993). Now a number of youth researchers are arguing for a 'post-

subcultural' approach. Alternative terminologies and post-subcultural

approaches to youth and music culture have emerged with a desire to focus

upon individual and fluid attachments to lifestyle, music, fashion and

consumption without presupposing collective identity. Here, I consider the

various strategies to have emerged to critique and replace subcultural theory.

Clubculture

The emergence of dance music and rave culture influenced a consideration of

music collectives as 'club cultures'. Moving away from the terminology of

subculture, because of the CCCS focus upon subcultures as expressions of

working class resistance, Thornton (1995) described club cultures as taste

cultures: they had their own cultural hierarchies of authenticity and taste, were

involved in consumption and were in dialogue with the media. According to

Thornton, participation in club culture is dependent on a participant's

possession of knowledge, interactions, speech and style that characterise a

'subcultural capital'. Using the concept of 'subcultural capital (a re-theorized version of Bourdieu's 'cultural capital), Thornton uncovers the ways in which her respondents demarcated distinctions of taste to identify insiders from outsiders, such as authentic vs. phoney, hip vs. mainstream and underground vs. media, and to negotiate and accumulate status. The study identified the media as having a central role in distributing, altering and creating subcultural capital and, hence, is involved in constructing 'authentic' subcultures. Participants in club culture, therefore, gain a sense of themselves from the way they are represented in the media. Although critiquing CCCS subcultural studies, in many respects Thornton's study still retains qualities of subcultural studies, describing a distinct culture with separate values, notions of authenticity and hierarchy, and shared subcultural style, speech and behaviour. Thornton's study bears certain similarities with Becker's (1963) observations of the distinctions made between insiders and outsiders by Jazz musicians and additionally with Cohen's (1972) views of the media shaping subcultural identity. Whereas Thornton highlights the posturing of hierarchy and 'authentic' identity in a music culture, she does not consider the process involved in becoming part of a club culture or the 'learning' required to obtain subcultural capital in the fan's "initial conversions" (Hills, 2002: 56). The study implies a distinction between the 'authentic' and 'inauthentic' clubber but does not consider how one becomes 'authentic'.

The Popular Cultural Studies approach of the Manchester Institute for Popular Culture used the term 'club culture' to represent contemporary sub-cultural

groupings influenced by a postmodern turn to re-theorizing music and style cultures as fluid, loose groupings centred on pleasure and choice. The term 'club culture' was used by Redhead (1997; 1997b) to portray loose collectives, commonly centred (although not exclusively) on Dance culture, Acid House and Rave and characterised as post-modern phenomena. The texts relating to this approach viewed musical taste as cutting across social class, education, age, gender and ethnicity; and saw such groupings as having common expectations and symbolic definitions. In particular, these studies highlighted the importance of pleasure and play in music culture. For example, Miles' (1997) account of female punks argued that punk was presented by her respondents as a means of comprehending and fashioning the self, and thus was used as a form of identity negotiation. In addition, these studies emphasized their difference from the CCCS approach to subculture, and their movement towards a post-subcultural approach. According to Muggleton (1997; 2000), the 'post-subculturalist' has no sense of subcultural authenticity, copying styles and experiencing subculture through the media prior to inscribing it. An emphasis on copied style therefore means, "that there are no rules, that there is no authenticity, no reason for ideological commitment, merely a stylistic game to be played" (Muggleton, 1997: 180). Polhemus (1997) re-theorized subcultures as 'styletribes' based around the consumption of a series of fragmented styles. Subcultural styles, he argued, have become more available and varied due to increased consumption, so that "we now inhabit a supermarket of style where, like tins of soup lined up on endless shelves, we can choose between more than fifty different styletribes"

(Polhemus, 1997: 132). The fragmentation and availability of styles demonstrates the possibility of less fixed, playful and multiple identities. These studies focused on the individual as way to understand collective youth cultural practices. Due to the preoccupation with the individual, this postmodern approach to subcultures gives a weak understanding of the group context of youth practices. It focuses on individual play without considering that youths can feel committed to and invested in a collective identity. As Blackman (2005: 15) argues, such an approach "reduces 'real' subculture to surface signifiers". The emphasis on postmodernity was part of a wider academic turn towards the notion of post-subculture, and the search for terminologies to replace 'subculture', to which I now turn.

Lifestyles and Neo-Tribes

The emergence of a concern with young people's consumption and lifestyle practices and a post-CCCS position can be related to the rise of post-subcultural studies. Post-subcultural studies emphasize fleeting gatherings and highlight the temporary and playful nature of identities, fragmented styles and tastes linked to music or youth culture (Bennett, 1999; Muggleton, 2000, Weinzierl and Muggleton (eds.), 2003). Such studies are linked to the claim that we are living in post-modern times that are characterised by increased consumption, fragmentation of style and the adoption of multiple identities (Featherstone, 1991; Bauman, 1992). 'Lifestyle' and 'neo-tribe' are key concepts that have emerged to portray post-subcultural youth groupings.

The term 'lifestyle' is used to describe and explain the wider aspects of identity and affiliation, primarily constructed through consumption. Jenkins (1983), argues that lifestyle is a more suited term than subculture, since it acknowledges the wider set of common cultural practices of youths. Lifestyle theory gives new emphasis on understanding how collective cultural meanings are inscribed on commodities (Bennett, 2000). Lifestyle is characterised by diversity and fragmentation, suggesting that multiple activities and interests intersect in our creation of identities and that it is a freely chosen game rather than a way of life (Chaney, 2004). Lifestyle remains closely related to the term subculture, but is seen to be distinct from the CCCS approach: "what was once described as subculture could now be regarded as collective lifestyle statements, which reflexively negotiate rather than directly mirror the structural experience of social class" (Chaney, 2004: 42). According to Chaney (1996; 2004), the construction of lifestyles, through consumption, offers a new way to negotiate structural issues. Lifestyles, he argues, provide a culture in which individuals can actively express and perform their identities and "provide a set of props for the person we would like to be" (Chaney, 1996: 19). Similarly, whilst recognising that lifestyle has post-modern characteristics, Miles (2000: 159) argues that they provide continuity in a changing world: "young people use their lifestyles, which on the surface appear to be fragmented or 'post-modern', as a highly rational and modernist way of stabilising their everyday lives". The terminology of lifestyle, therefore, offers a way to describe identifications that are less structured and permanent but that, like subcultures, offer a sense of self and continuity. By focusing on individual choice and

consumption, however, those taking up the term may forget the very real limitations of having low economic capital and its effect on restricting both choice and consumption.

The term 'tribe' or 'neo-tribe' is used to account for the fluidity and constructed nature of cultural memberships. Bennett (1999) argues that the concept of subculture is unworkable because it is tied to class and that it assumes identity is fixed. He argues that neo-tribalism is more suited to describe the localised and individualistic practices that construct a sense of collective identity. Bennett's study adopts Maffesoli's (1996) concept of 'neo-tribes' to describe his respondents' participation in Urban Dance music characterised by their shifting preferences, the fluidity of their group membership and also the practice of clubbing which involves a series of fragmented temporal experiences as participants move between dance floors and crowds. The term 'neo-tribe', Bennett (1999: 611) claims, also allows for the shifting nature of musical and stylistic preference:

> Musical taste, in keeping with other lifestyle orientations and
> preferences, is a rather more loosely defined sensibility than has
> previously been supposed…Music generates a range of moods
> and experiences which individuals are able to move freely
> between.

It is assumed that individual choice, eclectic taste and temporary preferences characterise the relationship between style, music taste and collective association for young people. According to Maffesoli (1996: 76), neo-tribes are "characterised by fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal" and such collectives signal a decline in individualism, a move to 'disindividuality', and a loss of self in the collective subject. The focus upon neo-tribes by Bennett (1999) is, however, only a partial interpretation of Maffesoli's theory of neo-tribes. Bennett does not consider a key tenet; that neo-tribalism is also characterised as a move towards emotional community. Maffesoli argues that there has been a shift from the rationalised social to emphatic sociality. Neo-tribes are, according to Maffesoli (1996: 16), "the expression of a particular crystallization of shared feelings", that our involvement with a collective (even for a short time) is centred on the need for 'affect'. Late modern collective identifications are thus based around feelings rather than commitment to particular ideologies and beliefs. A more successful adoption of the term neo-tribe is seen in Malbon's (1999) study of clubbing which situates the shared experiences of clubbing culture as an emotional community. Malbon (1999) draws on Maffesoli's 'neo-tribes' to account for young people's flitting between groups and the importance of 'the affectual' in their practices. It is the shared emotional experience of clubbing which gives clubbers a sense of collective identification. In her consideration of Russian youth culture, Pilkington (2004) also identifies the affective quality of youth groupings, which can constitute Maffesoli's (1996) 'emotional community'. She argues, however, that these groupings do not have neo-tribal qualities but rather rooted

identifications. Academics who have adopted the term neo-tribe disagree on its value and use. In considering 'modern primitives', Winge (2003: 129) argues that they are neo-tribal in character because contemporary body modifications and rituals have "hybridized meanings produced through the relocation of traditional symbols in a late modern urban context". Yet, this seems to be a description of postmodern characteristics rather than neo-tribal forms, because there is no consideration of increased collective identifications, sociality or temporality. According to Sweetman (2004), while the temporality associated with neo-tribes holds value for understanding youth culture, many youth practices continue to centre on permanent forms of collective identity. He argues that the tattoo is a permanent marker of allegiance, which challenges the implied temporality of neo-tribal theory. He therefore attempts to account for continued commitments within the context of postmodern identities. Sweetman (2004: 91) draws on the figures of the 'tourist' and 'traveller' to highlight different post-subcultural actors: "where the tourist playfully celebrates, happily rummaging in the dressing-up-box of past subcultural styles, the traveller chooses a costume and sticks to it – *at least for a short while*". Despite his conclusions, this does not explain why subculture still cannot be applied to those groupings, particularly in relation to those committed identities, and why he instead looks toward explaining them through post-subcultural theory. Researching neo-tribes does not allow for a consideration of the experience and influence of social structures. Graham St John's (2003) analysis of post-rave technocultures highlights the limitations of the concept in this respect. He argues that while post-rave technocultures are neo-tribal in their temporality,

because they are also a DiY culture they mix pleasure with politics. Members are therefore responding to 'real' political grievances and as such employ modernist forms of critical reason. The adoption of neo-tribe as an alternative terminology to subculture is problematic, because it has been separated from its original meaning in attempts to characterise varied cultural groupings that retain modern attributes.

Scenes

An additional term to have emerged alongside subculture and post-subculture is 'scene'. The term scene emerged as a folk concept used by music fans, music culture participants, musicians and media to describe the context in which producers, musicians and fans collectively distinguish themselves from others. 'Scene' has been adopted by some academics to refer to what previously would have been considered music-based subculture and, in contrast, has also been used to represent post-subcultural groupings.

'Scene' is used by Straw (1991) to refer to the interaction of musical practice rather than to describe a rooted music community. Scene is predominantly used to refer to the production and consumption of music and the activities of fans. The term is deemed suitable to describe music cultures because scene is a flexible term that can consider "the many connected facets of musical practice" (Stahl, 2004: 34), and that it connotes a more flexible, loose kind of space within which music is produced; a kind of "context for musical practice" (Kahn Harris, 2000: 128-9). When scene has been use to describe collectives, a

key emphasis is that it represents wider audiences and practices than the term subculture allows. In his research on older music fans, Bennett (2006) argues that the term scene allows for a more varied range of fan practices. According to Peterson and Bennett (2004:5) scene is relevant to a late-modern context, in which "identities are increasingly fluid and changeable" and where "most participants regularly put on and take off their scene identity". This has much in common with the post-subcultural emphasis on play and temporal identifications. The additional postmodern qualities of the term scene are visible in Shank's (1994: 122) study of the local context of music making via the rock and roll music scene in Austin, Texas, in which he defined scene as an "overproductive signifying community". The scene is characterised by the blurring between producers and consumers and the "overproduction of semiotic information that cannot be completely pursued". Participants take on a number of roles as spectator, fan and musician and together co-exist and participate as a scene. The concept of scene is also used to represent a group with shared common denominations; shared space, a shared sense of purpose and a shared sense of identity (Williams, 2006). This is the case for Kahn-Harris' (2004; 2007) studies of the Extreme Metal scene. Kahn Harris (2007) describes the Extreme Metal scene as having distinct practices, a shared hierarchy, values, subcultural capitals and committed participants. His study has much in common with Thornton's (1995) study of club culture and studies of subculture that emphasise the distinctiveness of a collective; but Kahn-Harris chooses to reject subcultural theory rather than revising it. At times there appears to be little difference between the use of scene and subculture.

The term scene is contradictorily used: it has represented both a bounded space and a fluid one, and this is a key problem for adopting the term (Hesmondhalgh, 2005; 2007). Scene is used by the media and academics with loose meaning, being used to portray particular localities (sometimes virtual), to portray consumption or production of a particular music genre or a collective identity, and has also signified postmodern qualities of fluid, shifting identities. It however remains unclear if adopting such a broad term has any greater success than subculture in representing distinct collective identifications.

Post-subcultural studies have largely considered subculture as implying rigid division and fixity, yet post-subcultural terminologies to emerge as 'replacements' are seemingly limited by the focus on temporary participation in collective formations such as music culture or, as in the case of scene, cause a certain amount of confusion about what is being represented. Post-subcultural studies, and in particular the concept of neo-tribes, have been critiqued for implying that taste and identity are "dependent on the whims of individuals" (Hesmondhalgh, 2007: 40). Such an emphasis on personal choice does not recognise that choice may be restricted (Blackman, 2005; Laughey, 2006). Although these studies distinguish the differences in participation and commitments within style and music cultures, and acknowledge the importance of pleasure and play, it is still unclear why communities with shared and distinct values and practices are not considered subcultural. Since the emergence of the post-subcultural approach, there has also been a return to

subcultural theory in attempts to explain cultures with collective values, hierarchies of authenticity, and committed identities.

A Return to Subculture

Despite the rise of alternative terminologies, subcultural theory has been revisited and re-evaluated as a useful definition to apply to collective identifications, particularly in relation to music cultures. Subculture is able to represent stable and committed identities, and strong attachments to distinct groups (MacDonald, 2001, Hodkinson, 2002; 2004).

In his study of UK Goth, Hodkinson (2002; 2004) uses a reworked notion of subculture. Hodkinson (2002) argues that subcultures are distinguishable from fluid collectives by their 'substance'. He gives four indicators of subcultural substance: consistent distinctiveness, identity, commitment and autonomy. He highlights that the Goth subculture has a set of tastes and norms such as style; a sense of insiders and outsiders, hierarchy and subcultural capitals; and value placed on subcultural activity and longevity. This emphasis on subcultures as distinctive cultures with substance has also emerged in studies of Straightedge. For instance, Haenfler (2006) highlights that participants in Straightedge subculture attempt to maintain boundaries and authenticity that reinforce their sense of belonging to a distinct group. Similarly, Williams (2006) argues that a key basis of subcultural participation in Straightedge is involvement in making distinctions of authenticity. These studies have highlighted that subculture can

represent collective identities with substance, commitment, hierarchy, their own distinctiveness, distinctions and notions of authenticity.

The location of music cultures can help account for the difference in experience and values within subcultures. The importance of place is stressed in Cohen's (1991) study of Liverpool Rock music, which suggests that the socio-economic hardship in Liverpool and a desire for escape has served to influence local music production and consumption. Locality has not only been shown to be significant to specific regions but also specific countries and continents. For instance, Pilkington's (1994) study of subcultural youth in Moscow demonstrates how western music and style are reworked for a non-western culture. In contrast, in his account of UK Goth subculture, Hodkinson (2002; 2004b) adopts the notion of 'trans-local' subculture. He argues that travelling between localities/regions of the UK enhanced the consistency of the Goth identity because it involved the cross-fertilization of norms and tastes. Music subcultures may be situated in translocal interaction or a local socio-economic context. Subculture has the ability to refer to distinct groupings that are situated, but also loose groupings that can span the local, virtual and global and that retain a distinct identity.

It may be perceived as problematic to return to the language of subculture. Subculture has been argued to be a "way of containment" because it implies separation (Jenks, 2005: 144). But as I have demonstrated earlier in this chapter, subculture does not have to be theorized as separate to mainstream

culture, rather it is sub-culture because it is a distinctive social grouping with a collective sense of identity and shared values and activities. Levine and Stumpf (1983) identify three crucial elements to distinguish subculture: (1) characteristic style, (2) a set of focal concerns and (3) an insider language. Similarly, Sardiello (1998: 121) argues that: "distinct languages, symbols and styles of life related to a value system", should define subculture. There are positive aspects to using a concept such as subculture because it can represent a distinct culture with shared hierarchies and authenticities, a shared notion of identity (even if imagined) and languages, styles and behaviours that have signifying power. One can acknowledge that subcultures are not always class defined, but subcultures still can have/offer imaginary power and give lives meaning. Subculture is a suitable term if it is adapted to represent late-modern music cultures. One must recognise that it can have distinct notions of identity linked to shared norms, values and tastes, hierarchies, authenticities and structures, yet still enable fluidity of identity; movement within and between music cultures; and change over time. As Mattar (2003: 285) argues: "contemporary subcultures display both 'modern' and 'postmodern' sensibilities that combine postmodern hyper-individualism, fluidity and fragmentation with a modernist emphasis on authenticity and underlying essence". It can be considered that subculture exists in individuals' imaginations and interactions whilst also providing structure and a meaningful identification in people's lives. I therefore argue that one can revise subcultural theory, viewing subcultures as having several definitions: as a culture defined

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through distinctions of taste and learning and as a 'performative feeling community'.

Re-theorizing Subcultures as Feeling Communities

I have so far argued that subcultural theory is still relevant as a means of understanding collective music identities, if we interpret it as representing non-normative cultures with distinctiveness and shared values, practices and hierarchy. Subculture has some value as a term to characterise some music-based cultural formations, if we revise it to accommodate notions of structured hierarchy, performance and interaction. In this thesis I consider the structured nature of Extreme Metal music subculture for my respondents, the existence of hierarchies, shared meanings and the systematic processes of membership that form notions of collective identity and taste. In so doing, I argue that these are not grounded structures but exist in the sociolinguistic interaction of the community and are reinforced by the community's shared experience of feeling linked to the feeling structures of Extreme Metal. I use the concept of 'community' because I consider this subculture to be formed in interactions that create togetherness and kinship for its members. I therefore re-theorize subculture as a 'performative feeling community'.

Subculture as Performative Speech Community

In order to elaborate on the interactive and iterated nature of subcultural identity, this thesis draws on Bakhtinian and poststructuralist accounts of language, and Butlerian (1990; 1993) notions of performativity. The Bakhtin

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Circle (in particular Bakhtin, 1981; Bakhtin 1986; and Voloshinov, 1973), claim that language and meaning exist in interaction. Through adopting a Bakhtinian approach to subculture, one assumes a sense of subcultural identity is produced through socio-linguistic interaction between oneself and another, just as the relational nature of the speech act:

> A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge belongs to me, then the other depends on my addressee. A word is a territory shared by both an addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor.
>
> (Voloshinov, 1973: 86)

Words and utterances emerge from a dialogical relation with others; in speaking, we must use words that are second-hand and imbued with meaning. In certain circumstances, we have an inability to command a repertoire of genres of social conversation. When we lack knowledge of the appropriate speech genre it creates difficulty in interaction, Bakhtin (1986) uses an example of an academic scholar, a person with excellent command of language, feeling helpless in a non-academic social situation. This highlights the power dynamics operating in every act of communication and can be used to explain how subcultures are able to exclude through language. The structures of subculture, whether they are hierarchical or pedagogical, therefore exist in the dialogic interactions of the community. They are imagined,

enforced and negotiated through common etiquettes, repertoires and performances that help define the cultural world (as speech community).

Bakhtinian dialogics can be related to poststructuralist accounts of language, because they share a relational view of language, in particular the performative, reiterative function of language and speech act. Butler (1990; 1993) describes the 'performative' in relation to the reiterative nature of identity:

> Where there is an 'I' who utters or speaks and thereby produces
> an effect in discourse, there is first a discourse which precedes
> and enables that 'I' and forms in language the constraining
> trajectory of its will.
>
> (Butler, 1993: 225)

For Butler, there is no existing identity; rather the effect of identity is produced through a repetition of acts, performances and discourses. The performative is a discursive construct, which enacts what it names, so through claiming an identity we actually take part in creating it. Although a dialogic and poststructuralist account of identity bear similarities, they do have specific differences that separate them:

> [T]he dialogic subject may share the same sense of
> provisionality as the postmodern subject (in the sense that she is
> made not once, but over and over again), she will not share his

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sense of irrevocable 'fragmentation' since she is always in the

process of 'reconstituting' through interaction with others.

<div align="right">(Pearce, 1994: 9)</div>

This reconstitution of identity can be seen, for example, in such interactions as telling stories about our lives structured with key events and characters that we narrate to have shaped ourselves. Drawing on the iterated and interactive nature of subcultural identification and subcultural activities, I therefore consider subculture as 'performative (speech) community'. 'Performative community' is an expansion of Bakhtin's concept of 'speech community', used by Epstein and Steinberg (2003) to propose drawing upon shared narratives and performances as well as speech etiquettes to reveal the nature of a cultural world. Placing subculture as a performative community, therefore allows for a consideration of the interactions, performances and performative practices, which serve to create and recreate subcultural identity.

Subculture as Feeling Community

Subcultures as performative community takes into account the interactions and performances that create subculture. These interactions may also include the music subculturalists' shared feelings related to their experience of music and community. Music subculture identities are not only based on shared authenticities, values, styles and activities but also the affective relationship between fan and music. One can, therefore, consider subculture in relation to

the feelings that the community is structured around that thus place it as a 'feeling community'.

Drawing on Brennan's (2003) 'structures of feeling', one can explore the interactive ways in which music gives the fan feelings and affective states that, in effect, provide the listener with deeper modes of identification. 'Structures of feeling' refer to the ways in which people in a specific locality (in this case the Extreme Metal subculture) have similar language and expression to articulate their feelings. In Brennan's (2003) study of the public mourning of Princess Diana[45] and the Hillsborough disaster[46], he attempts to consider shared feeling through the analysis of public condolence books and his own memory work. He uses the term 'local structures of feeling' to refer to the way in which people within a specific locality had similar articulations of their feelings of loss. Brennan's term 'structures of feeling' is adopted from Williams' (1984) use of the term to describe a particular sense of life: the ways and experiences of community that are actively felt but hardly need expression. A structure of feeling is as definite as a structure implies but operates through the everyday (our taken for granted social practices). A feeling structure can be related to 'speech genre' in that one's capability to take part successfully in interactions depends upon one's knowledge of the 'small differences'.

Through drawing on the notion of 'feeling structures' one can uncover the interactive, performative and subcultural nature of accounts of feelings. In

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[45] On 31st August 1997, Princess Diana died as a result of injuries sustained in a car crash.
[46] The Hillsborough incident was a football stadium disaster, which occurred on 15th April 1989 resulting in the deaths of 96 people.

effect, I am assuming that feeling communicates something of the Extreme Metal community for my respondents. It is the interaction of collective feeling that creates subcultural identification and therefore places subculture as a 'feeling community'.

Taste and Learning

By placing subculture as a performative feeling community, I consider the relational processes through which individual and collective identities are negotiated, affirmed and grounded. I present the distinct cultural nuances of Extreme Metal such as the subcultural practices that reinforce kinship and distinction; and the distinct processes by which Extreme Metal identity is taken up and retained. In so doing, I contend that a performative feeling community is also identifiable as a taste and learning culture, which exists in the interactions of the community.

Like subculture, a performative feeling community has notions of shared values and practices and also, like Thornton's (1995) 'club culture', has shared distinctions of taste and subcultural capitals. Bourdieuian concepts can be used to examine the group values, knowledge, speech and kinship that construct subcultural identity. Through considering Extreme Metal subculture as a form of 'taste culture', I am able to address the hierarchical relations at play that serve to structure a community identity and reinforce a sense of boundaries and membership. Although I draw upon Bourdieuian theory, I do so in the context

of assuming that the hierarchical practices of distinction exist in the social interactions and performances of a community.

In a subculture, participation is not static: identities change with time spent and subcultural capitals gained. The processes of learning and labouring can therefore reveal the process of becoming and being a 'member' of a music subculture alongside revealing something of the nature of the specific subculture and of collective identification itself. Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation' focuses upon learning as a cultural practice. Learning, transformation and change are implicated in one another and placed as an ongoing process. Such an emphasis upon process and the social character of learning highlights both the shared experiences of people in communities of social practices and the relational qualities of community structures, community identities and thus subculture.

I am arguing that Extreme Metal subculture can be re-theorized as a 'performative feeling community'. As subculture, the community is non-normative because it has distinct and shared values, practices, speech, hierarchy, and notions of authenticity. The collective identity of subculture, I maintain, exists in the interactions and identifications of its members reinforced through distinctions of taste and habitus gained through the process of learning. Furthermore, it is characterised by notions of shared feeling that are linked to the distinct feeling structures of Extreme Metal.

Conclusion

This chapter has served to outline the use of the concept of subculture and the subsequent debates that surround the suitability of the terminology, disagreement over its meaning and the contradictions in its use. I have illustrated that subcultural theory continues to have value for researching music culture. I have argued that the concept of subculture can have further significance if it is revised to consider the relational quality of subcultural identifications and the structures of feeling that construct the relationship between the subculturalist and music.

The rise of post-subcultural terminologies have emphasised the fluidity and temporality of collective identities and the importance of individual consumption, choice and play in the participation in youth and style cultures. Yet there exist distinct cultures that have shared qualities, value commitment and invest in notions of hierarchy. Those cultures continue to have qualities that were described in both the Chicago school and the CCCS accounts of subcultures. Several academics have returned to using the concept of subculture to refer to cultures that are distinct, have substance and have their own value systems, focal concerns, language and style, expected practices and hierarchy. These studies, which particularly focus upon music subculture, could still be strengthened by a consideration of the relationship subculturalists have with music and the interactions that create collective identifications. I have proposed a re-theorization of subculture that enables a consideration of the interactive, hierarchical structuring of authenticity and taste, and notions of

commitment and attachment to subculture. My approach assumes subcultural identity is always in the process of 'reconstituting' or 'becoming' through interactions with others; and consequently subculture is created through performance, performative interactions and structures of feeling, creating imagined structures, hierarchies and expectations. The thesis, therefore, recuperates subcultural theory as a framework of a theory of 'feeling communities' that can tell us not only about the spectacular dimensions of music subculture but also its deeper modes of identifications and attachments. Extreme Metal music subculture is thus positioned as a 'performative feeling community'.

Having set out the conceptual framework I am working with, the next chapter addresses the methodological strategy of my research. In light of my theoretical approach, I am faced with questions relating to how one is able to research Extreme Metal music subculture and Extreme Metal fans' attachments to it. Furthermore, how one can uncover fan investments and draw out their shared values, narratives, performances and feelings.

Chapter 4

Methodology and Experiences from the Field

The theoretical approach that I outlined in Chapter 3 is largely dependent on viewing the world as late-modern and our construction of selves in relation to the 'dialogic subject'. Late modernity presents us with a world less dominated by generalizations and master narratives and placing emphasis, instead, upon 'local cultures' and their 'multiplicity of stories' (Plummer, 2001). Our lives are storied, told with beginnings and endings; characters and settings; and using narrative and other rhetorical conventions to construct meanings and subject positions. Similarly, the writing up of data involves the selection and re-working of texts and the use of narrative and rhetorical devices (Redman, 1999). For Bakhtin (1981; 1986), discourse and meaning are rooted in the social process of interaction. Our speech is always oriented to an audience/addressee and influenced by the social interactions in which they take place. This thesis considers how my respondents' Extreme Metal identities are lived and culturally produced. I therefore, searched for a suitable methodology that could unravel the 'subcultural' and interactive qualities of music fan identity alongside the attachments and feelings connected to music genre fandom. I decided that these could be researched through methods that centred on producing rich data and via the examination of narratives, discursive constructions, social interactions and memory. The research was structured into 10 research group meetings over a seven-month period that involved the participation of six Extreme Metal fans. Through adopting a form of research

that concentrated upon group interaction, the development of group relationships over time and researcher interaction as research subject, I was able to introduce varied methods and gather thick descriptions and insight into how a group constructs shared identity.

This chapter considers my methodological decisions involved in conducting the study. Firstly, I consider my positioning as a researcher and as a participant in the Extreme Metal subculture in relation to being positioned as an 'insider'. Although accepting the term 'insider' is problematic, in that the researcher can never remove his/her researcher status, I argue that the researcher's experiences and positioning in relation to the area of research will always be significant to the research focus and outcome. This has influenced my aim to conduct reflexive research that places the researcher as research participant. I discuss my decision to undertake innovative group research that aimed to repeatedly meet with group participants, give priority to the participants and embed myself within the research through partaking in memory work and discussions. This is followed by a reflection of the potential problems I faced and my experiences within the research field. My adoption of a multi-method approach to group research is then addressed, considering my use of semi-structured interviewing, memory work, media elicitation and music elicitation in order to produce thick data that uncovered the research group members' experiences and attachments to Extreme Metal music, subcultural activity and their constructions of identity. I then outline my adoption of the discourse and narrative analysis of the data to enable the researcher to investigate the

embedded-ness of research subjects in collective discourses and performative narratives. Finally, I address the key ethical dilemmas of conducting this piece of research, in particular, issues of consent and anonymity.

The research methodology is centred on observing interaction and narratives that can tell me something of the construction, performance and relational nature of my own and my participants' identities, whilst revealing the distinct and meaningful place of Extreme Metal music within our lives. I now turn to my own narrative of Extreme Metal participation in order to situate my positioning within the research process and the researcher/researched relationship.

Insider Research

The influences that led to my choice of methodological approach are linked to my initial attraction to sociology, which was based largely on my desire to look deeper into the everyday and to examine the social worlds that influenced my sense of identity. My fandom of Extreme Metal music, participation as a musician, regular attendance at live Extreme Metal events and my subsequent adoption of the styles and values associated with the music subculture have been important aspects of my daily life since my late teens (as described in the introduction). My position as a researcher of members of a music collective in which I am involved and as a fan of the music that I deem important, inevitably had an impact on my choice of research focus, methodology and decisions

about how the research is conducted. In many respects, therefore, I could be identified as an 'insider' and my research as 'insider research'.

There are many perceived advantages of being an 'insider' all of which can be attributed to the presumption that the researcher possesses 'cultural competence' because s/he is linked to the group by key characteristics (Hodkinson, 2005). An insider is likely to understand the cultural distinctions, language and knowledge associated with the research field from the start. The researcher therefore does not have to spend as much time in the field 'learning' appropriate behaviours and interactions, and s/he may approach the research with less apprehension about what may be found. When researching Greenham Common protesters, Roseneil (1993) claims she was able to begin her research with a large number of ideas derived from her reflections on her own experiences as a participant. Being identified as 'insider' by one's research participants also has perceived advantages. Hodkinson (2005) describes the initial benefits of his being identified as Goth by those of the same subculture he was researching. Such identification led to generating a relaxed atmosphere conducive to open conversation and willingness to disclose. He also highlights that being identified as insider had the potential to remove an amount of conscious inaccuracy and misinformation because the researcher would be deemed able to recognise lies because of their prior knowledge. Similarly, in her study of girl punks, Leblanc (1999) considered her identification as 'Punk' and her alternative style of dress meant that her girl Punk participants identified her as an 'old Punk' and deemed her 'cool'. This essentially helped

her source respondents, take part in participant observation, gain trust and establish friendly relationships with her participants. Being positioned as an 'insider' by those being researched may, therefore, increase rapport, identification and feelings of shared experience between researcher and the researched.

When I began conducting the research, I already had a certain expectation of what I might find. My experiences as an Extreme Metal fan fuelled my initial ideas of what themes should be discussed and what I would like to examine in depth. The research group members often reinforced my position as 'insider' and emphasized our shared experience. When the group used the words, 'us' and 'we' it most often included me in the category. In this sense, my position of insider was confirmed and accepted by the group. I found that my identity as an Extreme Metal fan and my subcultural experience aided rapport and open conversation. Prior to group discussions, I could join in conversations about Extreme Metal music and live events, as I would with friends. In the research group interviews, I was able to offer anecdotes of my experiences and various stimuli to back up questions, which may have also influenced the depth of discussion.

Insider research has been particularly common within studies of music cultures, where the researcher has had prior involvement within the culture. There has been recent critique of insider research within the area of youth studies, particularly in relation to the researcher's positioning as a member of a

music culture. The researcher as insider can be criticised for her closeness to the researched and failing to retain professional and critical distance (Bennett, 2003). Having less distance between researcher and researched has been argued to result in over-rapport and the incapability of critical analysis (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Furthermore, by being identified as 'insider', participants might say what they think you want to hear or attempt to be consistent with what they view as dominant thinking (Bloor et al., 2001) or, in the context of my research, what is presumed normal subcultural behaviour and attitudes (Hodkinson, 2005). In addition, the researcher may attempt to be complicit in, or conform to, the dominant views and behaviour of the participants because of the desire to be accepted (Bennett, 2002). Despite such claims, it is important to take into account that all researchers enter the field and conduct interviews with their own preconceptions which need to be addressed whether identifying as 'insider' or not.

The term 'insider' suggests essentialism, assuming that only an insider of a group can research that group. Feminist standpoint theory argues that one's position, as a woman is crucial to understanding other women. With such a view the only way to know a socially constructed world is to know it from within (Smith, 1987). This suggests that being an insider, whether as a woman researching women or as an Extreme Metal fan researching Extreme Metal fans, will have benefits that 'outsiders' cannot replicate. Feminist standpoint can be criticised for its universalism. Not all women share the same experiences or power (Tanesini, 1999). Indeed, Harding (1987) argues that

gender experiences vary across cultural categories and are also often in conflict in any one individual's experience. In relation to research on music cultures, it is important to heed Bennett's (2002) warning to avoid the role of speaking on behalf of those you research as 'subcultural spokesperson'. The researcher risks placing her experience above the researched or may over-value her initial insights.

If one considers the post-subcultural perspective that youth cultures are diverse and loosely bounded, the embedded-ness of any social actor including the researcher is questionable (Hodkinson, 2005). In the same instance, as I argued in Chapter 3, there exist groupings that are unified by strong attachments, commitments and characteristics. If we agree that we have multiple identities and memberships of multiple groups, it can be argued that there is no 'true' insider view (Wolcott, 1999). It is unlikely for any researcher to feel like a complete insider: "the question of being an insider in any given situation is far from unproblematic. It is difficult to imagine any individuals so unreflective, that they consistently feel a complete insider in any situation" (Davies, 1999: 182). Researchers (and ethnographers) are never fully outside or inside the 'community'. The research relationship is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated in everyday actions (Naples, 1997). It is therefore arguable that in structural terms, we are all both insider and outsiders (Merton, 1972). Although I was involved in Extreme Metal subculture, this did not mean I felt that I would immediately be accepted into the group that I was researching or felt confident about what would emerge in fan discussions. If anything, I felt more

threatened that a group that mattered to me would reject me. I was an outsider

with regards to the local Extreme Metal 'scene' and a stranger to the research

participants. At the same time, my interest in Extreme Metal (and talking to the

participants as a music fan) meant that I felt accepted quickly into the group

and that I was in a relaxed and familiar environment. The research group did

not, however, always interpret me as an insider. The research group was also a

friendship group; all members knew each other and socialised with one another

outside of the research group. Sometimes when the participants stated 'we' it

only referred to the friendship group and what they had been doing whether

socially, or as organisers of a local Extreme Metal night, or as part of the local

scene. The participants also often reminded me of my researcher position. They

asked if the discussion was relevant and how I would be using it in my

research. I was therefore positioned as insider and outsider at different

moments within the research group. This suggests that the researcher's position

is never completely stable.

In many respects, the position of 'insider researcher' is a dual identity. I

position myself as both a sociologist and an Extreme Metal fan. Bennett (2002;

2003) argues that barriers will always exist between the researcher and the

researched regardless of the researcher's identity and, therefore, it is

impossible to be an insider whilst simultaneously being a researcher. To do

reflexive research as an insider involves placing the researcher's commitments

and investments under scrutiny and transforms the way in which the researcher

feels part of the culture being researched and as part of the research. A key task

therefore, is to make the transition from insider to 'critical insider' or 'insider researcher', who integrates reflexivity into the research process (Hodkinson, 2002; 2005). This, Hodkinson (2005) argues, involves the researcher as embedded fan/collective member going through a process of transformation that involves becoming aware of his/her taken for granted attitudes and interpretations. I may take certain aspects of the subculture surrounding Extreme Metal as given; but my experiences are also subject to my female, white, and academic status, which may also affect group discussion and eventually the analysis produced. Although one must accept that there is no such thing as a complete insider, it must also be acknowledged that experience and closeness to the field of research will affect the way in which the researcher conducts the research and interacts with the participants.

Reflexive Research

Whatever the positioning of the researcher in relation to her choice of field, it could be argued that we all carry experiences and values that shape our vision and interpretations (Wolf, 1996: 4). What is needed within any form of research, but particularly when the researcher has a certain insider identity, is the inclusion of what Stanley (1992) calls the 'auto/biographical I'. Stanley (1992) argues that the autobiography of the sociologist is crucial to the research no matter what the research activity. By placing my own autobiography (or autobiographical experiences) within the research, I am able to examine my own constructions of identity because such autobiographical knowledge is contextual, situational, specific and dependent upon the producer.

To conduct reflexive research as an insider involves placing the researcher's commitments and investments under scrutiny and transforms the way in which the researcher feels part of the research. A reflexive and interactive approach between researcher and researched has the potential to change people by encouraging self-reflection and therefore deeper understandings of their situations. On the subject of researcher reflexivity, Bennett (2003: 196) has suggested that researchers of music collectives with 'insider knowledge' should conduct reflexive ethnography in which the researcher and the respondents work together and examine their explanations and constructions:

> Youth researchers entering fieldwork settings with fully formed knowledge of particular music and attendant discourses of fandom could effectively use this knowledge as a means of conducting a reflexive ethnography in which the researcher and his/her respondents work through the process via which music is transformed into a means of symbolically negotiating the everyday.

This approach does not, however, need to be restricted to ethnography. A reflexive and interactive approach between researcher and researched can be made key elements of any research approach, particularly when the researcher is already partially embedded within the culture. Such research designs have the potential to change people by encouraging self-reflection and therefore deeper understandings of their situations.

There have been recent critiques of reflexivity in qualitative research, which focus on the limitations of introducing the researcher's 'self' into the research. Adkins (2002) claims that reflexivity inscribes a hierarchy of speaking positions in social research, which does nothing to redress the positions of knower and known. Similarly, Skeggs (2002: 369) argues that writing about the self is a form of 'self-cultivation', to reconcile fractured aspects of the researcher's self and to maintain difference and distinction; as a result, "others just become resources for self-formation". To have self-reflexivity as a researcher does not necessarily have to result in this, especially if the researcher takes part in the research and places her words under the same scrutiny of analysis. To include myself in the research beyond a researcher role was important to me, as I wanted to deconstruct my everyday and taken for granted assumptions. I actively attempted to follow the example of feminist research methodology through disclosing biases, feelings and choices, whilst locating myself within the research process (Maguire, 2001). The involvement of the researcher and the closeness to the researched can be interpreted as attempts to break down the barriers between the researcher and the researched, to reduce the imbalance of power and to create an atmosphere that produces thicker description, honesty and freedom of expression (Stanley and Wise, 1993). For example, Oakley (1981) argues for researcher intimacy and self-disclosure in research. Oakley felt that as an interviewer she had to be prepared to share knowledge and invest her identity into the relationship. Feminists have adopted methods such as interactive interviewing in the pursuit of a more equal

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research relationship that involves the sharing of personal and social experiences of both respondents and researchers (Ellis et al., 1997). It is important to recognise that fieldwork is personal, emotional identity work, and that the construction and production of self and identity occur during and after the research process (Coffey, 1999). To do reflexive research involves placing the researcher's attachments, commitments and investments under scrutiny and transforms the researcher's views:

> Researchers who self-disclose are re-formulating the
> researcher's role in a way that maximises engagement of the
> self but also increases the researcher's vulnerability to criticism,
> both for what is revealed and for the very act of self-disclosure.
>
> (Reinharz, 1992: 34)

Being close to those researched can lead to friendship but this also creates difficulties for the researcher as Berger (2001: 513) explains: "I often become confused about where I should stand, how much of myself to share, feeling guilt about playing the double roles of researcher and friend". There is no easy way to address this duality of such feelings, but follow a research design that promotes interactivity and reflexivity between the researcher and the researched.

<u>Group Research</u>

I chose to create a 'research group' based on the idea of combining the qualitative group interview with ethnography. The research would feature in people's lives for a significant length of time and I would adopt various methods to collect data within a group interview setting. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 2) claim ethnography can be understood as a method that draws on varied sources, that entails participating in people's lives for an extended period of time and that involves collecting whatever data are available to investigate the issues one is concerned with. My approach to ongoing group research is similar to ethnographic field research because I am attempting to learn from people, to understand their way of life from their point of view. Although the group meetings were organised by me as researcher, in certain respects I was researching a group of Extreme Metal fans in natural settings. The research group was a friendship group which regularly met to socialise, at the house the research group meetings took place, to talk about music, friends and subcultural activities, and to listen to and share music with one another. Prior to the group discussion, this is how the group behaved and I was included in these conversations as an Extreme Metal fan. During these periods, I observed the research group members' passionate debates and reviews of Extreme Metal music, heard about their ongoing subcultural activities (the Extreme Metal bands that they were members of, their stories about their involvement organising Extreme Metal live music club nights), gossip about friends and descriptions of other Extreme Metal activities.

My researching of the field involved keeping field notes and a journal. I wrote field notes after the group meetings; writing down phrases and words used, recalling conversations and my observations of the interactions of the group prior to and after recorded group discussion. I also noted details of the group members I had discovered, such as educational background, age, employment and their specific activities in Extreme Metal subculture. I made field notes about the group dynamic during our recorded discussion, for example, at what point I had felt 'group-speak' may have occurred and whether the group had steered the discussion. I kept an ongoing field diary. This was a record of my experiences, ideas, fears and thought-process. In particular, I wrote about how I had felt the meetings had succeeded, my anxieties during my time in the field, the themes and common discourses I could see emerging, and my ideas for future research group meetings. The field notes were incorporated into my transcripts: I wrote an account of my field observations and placed this in front of the transcribed taped interview, I also added notes on the group dynamics at appropriate intersections of the transcript. As a result, when analysing data I was able to code the whole text and read the data in context. In addition, I was able to read my diary to recollect memories of the group meetings and recall the emerging themes.

By 'research group', I am referring to a recurring group meeting that had a continued membership. Group interaction can provide insight unavailable outside the group context (Wilkinson, 1999). The researcher is able to explore how accounts are articulated, censured and changed through social interaction

(Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). It can also be considered to be a more detailed and reliable way to uncover group norms and taken for granted assumptions (Bloor et al., 2001). Group discussions allow the researcher to see how people interact in considering a topic, and how they react to disagreement. They may also help identify attitudes and behaviours that are considered socially unacceptable (Fielding and Thomas, 2001). Through being able to repeatedly meet, group participants become integral to the research. The members are able to address a greater range of topics and have the opportunity to develop their opinions and reflections. In addition, it can make members feel important and invested in the research, resulting in their being more forthcoming in their answers and keen to self-evaluate. Moreover, creating an environment in which the researcher and participants can return to previous discussions can give clarity and enable the researcher opportunity to introduce differing methods with the participants. A 'research group' therefore offers the potential to generate rich data of thick descriptions, group interactions and to illustrate a group's meaning making.

Recruitment of the Group

Recruitment for the research group started with my contacting the organisers of a monthly Extreme Metal club in a city in the English West Midlands[47] that I was aware of from my own activity. I contacted them via their 'Myspace' page,[48] which advertised the nights, giving a short description of my research and a request for their participation or their help in giving me further

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[47] These were monthly club nights that most often entailed DJs playing Extreme Metal music and live (and often local) Extreme Metal bands.
[48] Myspace is a social network Internet site

contacts.[49] I chose to contact them through 'Myspace' because it was informal

and it gave my contacts an opportunity to 'see me' via 'My profile'[50]. The

organisers of the Extreme Metal club expressed interest in taking part and

recommended my posting an advert about my research on their Internet forum

on which regular attendants of the Extreme Metal night posted. After my initial

contact, participants of the research group were self-selecting with the main

recruitment being conducted by the organisers who asked their friends. I

received numerous responses to my posting on the Internet forum but a key

problem was that many of the respondents could not commit to more than one

meeting or only offered to conduct an interview on the Internet due to wider

commitments and time or geographical location. The final research group

participants were all friends of the initial contacts.[51] Members' ages ranged

from 19 to 31, they all knew one another and attended (some organising) the

same Extreme Metal club. My two initial contacts, Liam and Chloe,[52] were in a

relationship and living together, they offered their house as a venue to hold the

ongoing research group. This location was also a familiar setting for the other

participants because they were already part of this friendship group. This was a

suitable venue to conduct the group meetings because there was little

background noise to affect the tape-recording of discussions and the members

of the research group seemed comfortable in a familiar environment. Once the

research group commenced, maintaining the same group with the same

participants also proved difficult. As Bloor et al., (2001) have highlighted, in

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[49] See Appendix A for the original message.
[50] 'My profile' contained a picture of me, displayed details of my tastes in music, literature and art and listed my 'friends' that also contained band profiles.
[51] See Appendix B for a brief description of each of the research group members.
[52] The names I give my respondents are pseudonyms.

many instances it may be impossible to bring an identical group together for a second, or subsequent discussions because social groups are dynamic and the circumstances of individuals change over time. Trying to arrange a date and time where everyone was available proved problematic. Some of the participants therefore attended only a few of the group meetings. The research group meetings took place over a seven-month period in 2007 meeting 10 times in total.[53] These sessions were between two and a half hours and three and a half hours in length. The group had seven different members including myself, most often meeting as a group of four and always with three of the organisers of the Extreme Metal club.

Group Sample

The group sample was clearly a small one and was not subject to a random sampling process or an attempt to generate a statistically valid sample. Instead I relied upon my initial contacts to source participants. The sample was self-selecting. It is not representative and therefore one cannot make generalisations from the data (Bryman, 2008). If I had been more interested in general perceptions of Extreme Metal fans then a different method of sampling may have been chosen. I committed to a small sample because I was not trying to find empirical regularities rather I was seeking to explore the meanings and descriptions given by individual fans and a friendship group of their attachments, investments and commitments to Extreme Metal music and subculture. If I had conducted my research with a much larger sample, I feel I

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[53] See Appendix C for the outline of the research group meetings.

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would have not obtained thick descriptions that generated rich data, observed 'natural' group interactions and built up a research relationship that facilitated the telling of attachments, feelings and personal narratives. Qualitative research is not about counting opinions or people (Gaskell, 2000) rather it is about exploring experiences of living cultural forms and identities (Redman, 1999). Although there is conflict over 'validity' or 'truth' in small-scale qualitative research and ethnography, it can equally be argued that "all judgements about truth of knowledge claims rest on assumptions" (Hammersley, 1992: 69). If one rejects a modernist notion of true knowledge and replaces it with a postmodern understanding of knowledge as social construction then one accepts that "there are multiple ways of knowing and multiple truths" (Kvale, 2002: 301). The 'truth' is constructed; the stories we tell are therefore dependent upon audience, context and our storied selves.

Group Research Considerations and Experiences

As with a focus group, the research group gave priority to the participants in an attempt to enable them to use their own frameworks and concepts for understanding the world (Kitzinger, 1994; Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999). It further allowed the participants to speak in their own voices, to express their own thoughts and feelings and to determine their own agendas (Wilkinson, 1999: 71). I wanted to consider the research group members' suggestions for the format of groups, the subjects they deemed important, and where they wanted the research to take place. I also asked my respondents for advice and help, particularly in relation to their 'expert' knowledge about Extreme Metal

music genres and culture. This was not only limited to the period of research. After the research groups came to an end we decided to meet to talk about what I would be writing about and get their take on my ideas. To give the group a sense of what had been written academically on Extreme Metal, I let them borrow my copy of Keith Kahn Harris (2007) *Extreme Metal*. They were vocal in their opinions about the book, pointing out what they considered factual irregularities and offered their interpretations of what they had read. The group members in many ways were assertive in their participation. Without any researcher influence they often questioned the relevance of their conversations and self-steered back onto subject. They also asked more questions of their own, as the research group went on over time, often adopting the role of interviewer:

>
> Ben: So you think a scene needs to have some kinda shared purpose? (Directed to Liam)
>
> Liam: Yeah, but I don't think it is something where people sit down and say now the purpose of this is…
>
> Ben: The shared purpose less narrow than being into the same music?
>
> Liam: Yeah.

Despite my participation in discussion, the group members often reminded me of my position as researcher. They asked how the discussions would be relevant to the research, and also questioned the relevance of their conversations in the breaks we had. I also was queried about research themes and approaches and what I was thinking about using. The research group participants were also quite unwilling at the outset to offer recommendations in relation to what they wanted to talk about. It was clear that they wanted to be told what was happening in order to feel comfortable, even safe, about the research. Later in the research period, they became more vocal but still positioned me as the researcher that directed the subject of conversation. At certain points in the research groups I did clearly take on the researcher role, in that I directed discussion with questions when the group had little to say. At times when the discussion veered off onto such things as gossip about their absent friends that bore little relation to the research focus, I attempted to steer the conversation back on subject. I also introduced the subject to discuss, instructed the group to write a story or listen to music, therefore still making the key decisions within the group. In this sense despite all my efforts, I retained a powerful position as a group-leader with the members invariably viewing me as the researcher.

As previously stated, the research group was a friendship group. All of the members knew one another and socialised with one another prior to the research. Two of the members were also in a relationship together. Researching a group of friends has potential benefits. Participants may be more relaxed and

less inhibited in the presence of friends (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). The group interaction of friends, Kitzinger (1994) claims, generates 'naturally occurring' data; it is a familiar social context within which decisions are made and performances take place. Interviewing a friendship group may, however, result in peer pressure to display consistent behaviour and may also affect the quality of a discussion because the group may decide to take part in deception or manoeuvre research (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999). I found that by having research group participants who knew each other, could actually prevent potential inaccuracies because another member would declare an inconsistency or mention details that could be added to another participant's comment. Sometimes information was filled in by other members, which persuaded others to add their experience in more detail:

NA: If you don't like something do you give it a second
        listen?

Ben: It depends who has recommended it to me.

Jack: You have done that with me where I've said "this CD is
        great" and you have gone "ahh it's fucking rubbish" then
        you have listened to it again and bought it and you think
        it's great.

Ben: Yeah.

Liam: Yeah, I go with people, you know, like if Ben or Jack

said it was worth hearing I would give it a repeated

listen to see if I could get into it, cos I trust their opinion.

Also I think you do develop an ear for it. I remember

buying a CD, which had some really early *Sepultura* and

Pantera on it and [I remember] just listening to it and

thinking 'oh my God'. Then coming back to it a bit later

with some repeated listens and actually getting it.

In the same way, accounts of organising Extreme Metal nights and the local

scene were collectively described, accounted for and imagined, providing a

more detailed picture of members' experiences. Group interviews have

associated problems with domination of participants and the dominant opinion

of the group, or 'group-think' which may interfere with individual expression

(Fontana and Frey, 2000: 652). On some occasions, an individual's opinions

changed after hearing a group member speak but this can also be considered as

a natural process of interaction, we often make sense of our opinions about

something by talking about it with others. Another key problem associated

with the group interview is the fear of embarrassment or loss of status. Group

members may have avoided describing aspects of their behaviour or attitudes

that are inconsistent with their preferred self-image (Fielding and Thomas,

2001). There were, however, actually quite a few confessions made by group

members that were exclaimed with some embarrassment:

Ben: Ha-ha, I'm glad you said that actually because I've done

that [cried] at gigs, but I've never admitted it to anyone

before because I thought it was wimpy as hell.

Such disclosures may have been due to the group being a friendship group and

suggests that the participants were not avoiding describing their behaviours and

experiences to one another. Although, once again, one must also consider we

construct stories to maintain a sense of 'self'.

Having introduced myself to the research group as a researcher and as an

Extreme Metal fan and subcultural participant, I found that my position as

subcultural member and my subcultural capital[54] were often put to the test

during the research process. My subcultural capital was immediately tested in

my contacting the future group members using 'Myspace'. My message gave

them access to my 'Myspace profile' that displayed a picture of me,

information about what I enjoyed listening to (and the art and literature I

appreciated). In viewing my profile, potential research group members were

able to judge my status as Extreme Metal fan and subcultural member. If I had

transmitted the 'wrong' impression, I may not have received a positive

response (or a response at all). I had not crafted my profile for the purpose of

the research. This process was, therefore, also a test of my perceived status as

subcultural member. I may have felt personally offended if those I had

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[54] I address my adoption of the term 'subcultural capital' in Chapter 3. I will go on to discuss
my respondents' subcultural capital in Chapter 5.

contacted rejected me. Each research group meeting also featured moments when my status as subcultural member was tested. Group member Chloe picked me up from the train station in her car to travel to her home where the group was taking place (and subsequently transported me back). During these journeys, we would talk about planned activities such as the gigs/festivals we were going to attend. Furthermore, this was a time in which Chloe questioned me about my life and subcultural activity. Her questions may have been purposeful tests of my subcultural capital and moreover my status as 'Extreme Metal', although this remains unclear. When I arrived at Chloe and Liam's house and awaited the other group members' arrival, prior to recording group discussion, I would talk with the group about gigs we had been to, and new Extreme Metal music we had heard. These were natural conversations but I am aware that it was at these points that the group was also gaining information about me. I was asked about my opinions of bands, my knowledge of festivals and music genres. It is these interactions (and testings), therefore, that reinforced my position as 'insider researcher'.

The reflexive process of the researcher's involvement within group research, in practice, meant that at times I felt challenged and pressured to prove my 'insider' status. When challenges were most obvious, I did feel a degree of pressure to perform, and felt frustration when I could not recall details:

> NA: Yeah, I'm looking forward to see *Koldbrann*,
> especially.

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Ben: What stuff of theirs have you got?

NA: I've got their latest [album], what's it called?

         Mori? Moribund. That's an awesome album.

         And I've got Nekrotisk something, I can't

         remember the title.

Ben: Nekrotisk Inkvisition?

NA: Yeah, that's it. I'm not great [at] remembering

         names, I'm the same with track titles, I'm like

         "track 5 is good".

In this conversation with Ben, I felt that I needed to justify my inability to remember the correct title. When questioned about Extreme Metal music, at times I felt anxious because as a subcultural member I did not want my identity and status to be questioned. Another tension in the research process related to my reflexive participation in the research group. My willingness to be open about my experiences and tastes did put me in an awkward situation: at one point I expressed strong dislike for the band *Obituary* only to subsequently discover that *Obituary* was one of Liam and Chloe's favourite bands. This situation was, however, an unavoidable one because during every group meeting the group put on recently purchased and favourite music for me to

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listen to with the expectation that I would give my honest review of it. Although my opinion may have offended, my expression of different Extreme Metal preferences and taste probably reinforced to the group that I too had a passionate fandom of Extreme Metal.

Using Methods within the Research Group

I drew on several qualitative methods in order to generate, enrich and facilitate the data from the research group meetings. It has been implied that different kinds of media produce different kinds of meanings (Dicks et al., 2000). Each method I adopted in the hope of producing diverse 'types' of data, and facilitate additional responses. The qualitative researcher should use the aesthetic and material tools of his/her craft to deploy whatever strategies, methods, or materials are at hand (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Using a range of methods in the context of a research group had the potential to uncover many dimensions of music fandom, to explore the cultural production of fan identities, and to consider the processes and related discourses of learning, investing, performing and feeling related to music identity and subcultural participation. I used several qualitative methods within the research group, they were: semi-structured group interview, memory work (or story-writing), media, and music elicitation. Each method helped produce and enhance different interactions. Semi-structured group interviews enabled the group to have themed discussions to reveal narrated experience, group identifications and the interactive nature of identity. Memory work was adopted to consider the relationship between individual and collective identities and the construction

and performance of identity and life stories. Media elicitation was utilised to illustrate individual and collective critiques of media and opinions, alongside facilitating group discussion. Music elicitation was used to stimulate group discussion of attachments and feelings linked to music fandom and to enable participants to attempt to express feelings. Each method, therefore, had a part to play in inducing thick description, individual revelations and group interactions.

Semi-structured Interviewing

The dominant method of research was the use of qualitative semi-structured interviewing in a group context. The interview provides a means to explore the activities, performances, identities and realities of the research subjects. Interviews also enable the researcher to gain data in interaction with the respondent. Denzin (2001: 25) has described this interactive work of the interview:

> [T]he interview functions as a narrative device which allows
> persons who are so inclined to tell stories about themselves. In
> the moment of story-telling, teller and listener, performer and
> audience, share the goal of participating in an experience, which
> reveals their shared same-ness.

The relationship between interviewer and the interviewee is therefore dynamic, with the interviewer seen as active participant and interviews as negotiated

accomplishments (Fontana and Frey, 2000: 663). Holstein and Gubrium (2004: 141) claim all interviews are 'active interviews', in that respondents are constructors of knowledge in association with interviewers. The qualitative interview therefore provides an interactive moment in which we can narrate experience, reveal identifications and construct our 'selves'.

Group interviews were semi-structured. They involved my attending the research group with a list of related themes, which I wanted research group discussion to cover, and ideas about what group tasks I wanted the research group to conduct, such as a title for a memory work story. In many respects, the research group interview was conversational with an open-ended structure. Discussion often diversified to cover wider aspects of the research group members' lives and relationships beyond music fandom. The looseness of structure meant that I was able to see how the conversation flowed and limit the interference of direction by myself. There are, however, limitations to what can be interpreted as open and frank discussion because it may be impeded by group members' attempts at rationalisation: "Respondents may offer only logical reasons for their actions, withholding evaluative or emotional reasons that may give a truer insight" (Fielding and Thomas, 2001: 126). Such discussions can also be impeded by language because many people may not be used to putting their feelings into words or be able to find the right words to express their feelings (Negus, 1996; Fielding and Thomas, 2001).

Ellis and Berger (2003) use the phrase 'reflexive dyadic interviewing' to describe a situation where the interviewer asks questions but shares her personal experience or reflects on the communicative process of the interview. The researcher, therefore, feels a reciprocal desire to disclose. The group interviews involved my joining in the conversation, discussing my experiences, whilst guiding the discussion as group leader; attempting to get the group to discuss the chosen themes. I additionally participated in the group tasks and took part in critiquing my actions, assumptions and performances as a music fan. I, therefore, positioned myself as a group member of the research group. In many ways, the group interviews were not natural conversations on my behalf because although giving my opinions, stories of experience and divulging information about my life, I was always careful to make sure that I did not take over the conversation or lead the group to agree with me. Instead, I would often wait until opinion had been aired before offering my own views. During group discussions I was also constantly aware of the need to introduce new topics into the conversation, whether we were covering the themes I wanted to cover, deciding when was the right time to stop the group gossiping about friends or recommending music and to re-introduce the thread of our discussion. At the same time, I was aware that I did not want to influence the group too much, as my aim was for open-ended discussion in and through which group members felt entitled to bring up subjects and to question views.

There were some limitations to using the semi-structured interview method. Firstly, there was a lack of illustration, with my participants' using overarching

statements when discussing media and music, rather than providing examples. Due to the interview being a group one, accounts of individual participant's histories and personal experiences were sometimes overshadowed by collective stories. There also existed the dilemma of how to get my participants to talk about their attachments and feelings openly, and aid them in this due to the limits of language. I decided, therefore to draw on additional qualitative methods within the interview setting to create focused discussion, more personal accounts of music fandom and to aid discussions of the affective states linked to music genre fandom and subcultural participation.

Memory Work

Certain aspects of interview discussion in the research group meetings focused upon participants' biographies, which uncovered music's place and importance in life stories. The emergence of such narratives had the potential to provide insight into the construction of identity, commitment, change and emotional attachment to music. To further consider how narrative practices are used to locate ourselves in relation to events and identities, I decided to use 'memory work' (written stories) within some of the group meetings. Memory work does not place experience as evidence, but rather it investigates it:

> Memory work is an attempt to work with experience in such a way as to question the connections between experience and selves and subjects, to simultaneously envisage experience as socially produced and amenable to reinterpretation.

(Stephenson, 2005: 34)

Memory work is a collective process of writing and analysis. After specific themes are identified, individuals write about memories triggered by the themes. A key image or incident is then focused upon and details, sights, smells and feelings surrounding it are built up in an active effort of remembrance and with minimum attempt to interpret or analyse. Individual memories are then subject to a process of a collective analysis. (Haug and Others., 1987: 71-2). The aim of memory work is to "identify the ways in which human beings reproduce social structures by constructing themselves into those structures" (Haug, 1992: 43). Haug and Others (1987) devised a specific methodology of memory work, which involved writing in the third person, followed by collective analysis and then rewriting the memory. I adopted an approach to memory work which placed less emphasis upon how the stories were written and how the group decided to analyse them and more upon writing stories about particular themes/events in whatever way they felt comfortable. At the beginning of the session, the group members were asked to write about certain events (such as remembering a physical response to an Extreme Metal live event) for a short period (10 to 15 minutes), the group members then took turns to read out their stories and then group discussion around what was written/read followed. I was unconcerned with how it really was but "rather how individuals construct themselves, change themselves, reinterpret themselves and see what benefits they derive from doing so" (Haug, 1992: 20).

Memory work has been utilised by researchers to place themselves into their research. Redman (1999) placed his memory work stories of experiencing first love/romance alongside interviews about college boys' experiences of romance. Brennan (2003) placed his memory work on public mourning alongside his analysis of condolence books. Rather than separate my memory work from the rest of the research group, I wanted to examine myself and take part in the research alongside my participants. As a research group member, I took part in the writing of memory work alongside the research participants; I therefore was utilising my subjectivity as a feature of the research process (Walkerdine, 1997). Including my own memory work offered an additional chance to examine and critically interpret my own construction of experiences, my own preconceptions, and construction of subjectivity, which further aided my interpretation of the data. Self-observation is a critical tool. It challenges our own preconceptions and constructions of subjectivity (Plummer, 2001; Brennan, 2003). Using the method of memory work in the research group is another way in which the hierarchy between researcher and researched could be reduced. I was subjecting myself to a similar level of outside scrutiny, to be critiqued and placed under the same spotlight as the other research group members. I also risked unleashing personal anxieties through making a range of disclosures (Brennan, 2003).

I used memory work within half of the research group meetings. A key problem I encountered emerged when a new member joined the group. This

group member appeared to dislike the story writing and in fact would not write a word in his notebook, yet he was willing to participate in the discussions. To combat this and still involve him I allowed him to use the time we spent writing to think and then tell his story. This went against my ideal structure but I was more than willing to be flexible in order to prevent someone feeling uncomfortable or not participating. At the same time, the unwillingness most probably made the other members more uncomfortable and conscious about their writing. An additional problem was getting the group to analyse their stories. The memory work rather drew out discussion on the similarities and differences in their experiences, fuelling further anecdotes. This is not to say there was not any self-realisation or reflection but it was limited in these respects.

Media Elicitation

In the first two research group sessions that I conducted, there were many negative statements made about the Extreme Metal media. I felt that being able to discuss material from magazines would not only illustrate what the group were referring to, but also reduce generalised statements and explain more about the distinctions that the group were making. I, therefore, decided to use a form of 'media elicitation' in which conversation and opinion was elicited by looking through recent Extreme Metal magazines, fanzines and articles, which the group participants brought to the interview. In one of the research group meetings we looked through recent Extreme Metal media, attempting to explain likes and dislikes, examining what the media did and how it informed

our outlooks. We also chose articles that displayed what we saw as positive and negative traits in the media. Such an approach opened up discussion, memories and attitudes about the music press and past behaviours as fans. It was a visual way to explain the group's claims and disdain for certain Extreme Metal media and their opinions about image, style, authenticity and performance. It also prompted memories and stories about change, alongside predictions about the future. This approach has similarities with research on media reception. For example, Katz and Liebes' (1990) study of the cross-cultural reception of the US soap 'Dallas' involved showing an episode to participants and initiating group discussion after. This served to contextualise the participants talk and gain their interpretations of the episode. Utilising resources such as media to elicit and focus discussion therefore potentially benefit the group interview and the quality of data produced.

Music Elicitation

Researching the relationship between music and feelings may be problematic. Negus (1996: 3) explains that although we may 'feel' and 'know' music as soon as we try to communicate and share this experience, language fails us: it cannot be easily explained or communicated. In order to explore notions of 'feeling' alongside a consideration of how people view music and how they talk about music, it was therefore important to use music as a form of research method. Sound and music are under explored resources for social research, which may be due to the intrinsic characteristics of the medium (Bauer, 2000). Nevertheless, the characteristics of music may offer a particular route to our

feelings and memories. Keightley and Pickering (2006: 153) claim that popular music can be considered as a technology of memory:

> We all know of occasions when a popular song or piece of music is suddenly heard, connects us seemingly in a very direct manner to a particular time in our past, perhaps quite long ago. It can recreate for us the texture of a specific experience, including the way that it became assimilated into our own interiority and was felt in a quality that we never quite put into words (and perhaps cannot now).

Music, therefore, is argued to have the power to aid 'remembering'. Using music within qualitative research interviews can offer similar qualities to the use of photographs:

> Images are resonant with submerged memories, and can help focus interviewees, free up their memories, and create a piece of 'shared business' in which the researcher and the interviewee can talk together, perhaps in a more relaxed manner than without such stimulus.
>
> (Loizos, 2000: 98)

Music too has the potential to be used to aid memory, discussion and multiple interpretations. One can approach using music within the interview in a similar

respect to photo elicitation, such as Samuels (2007) use of 'autodriven photo elicitation' where photos are taken by the research subjects and then used in the interview process. This gives respondents the opportunity to elaborate on their world and enable research subjects to create their own sense of meaning and disclose it to the researcher. Music has been used in methodologies outside of sociology to observe responses and associations, for example Snyder (1993), uses 'auditory elicitation' in his consideration of pieces of music associated with sport. In his approach, respondents wrote subjective meanings they associated with musical selections as they were played. The method, therefore, elicited meaning and emotions placed onto music. I decided to use music in a similar respect to 'photo elicitation' and 'auditory elicitation', which I refer to as 'music elicitation'. Music elicitation shares similarities with these methods because it involves participants bringing to the group examples of music they were fans of, and then playing them in the interview process, which leads to accounts of affective responses and interview discussion.

In two of the research group meetings, I decided to use music as a medium to elicit and fuel discussion and response. Each group member chose a music track (a track they 'loved' and a track that specifically drew out certain feelings or emotions).[55] The group then listened to each group member's choice of music. Participants were supplied with a notebook and pen providing the option to record their thoughts and feelings whilst listening. The group then took it in turns to verbally describe their reactions to each piece of music,

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[55] See Appendix D for a discography of the music the group members chose.

finally returning to the participant who chose the music to give an account of their reaction accompanied by an explanation for their choice of track. This was repeated with each participant. This led to group discussion with a focus upon how Extreme Metal music made group members 'feel', what they liked and disliked about the various choices, their reactions to the choice and their taxonomisation of the music into genre.

My utilization of the 'music elicitation' method within the research group proved successful in producing accounts of feeling and fuelled participant discussion around the appeal of Extreme Metal music as a genre and music taste. At the same time my respondents found it difficult to vocalise 'feeling', that is, to find the language to explain how a piece of music made them feel. Despite this method being used to ascertain personal and affective accounts of music fandom, the narratives to arise from music elicitation could also tell us more about what is perceived to be 'authentic' or popular by the group members.

Handling Data: Discourse and Narrative Analysis

The analysis of the research transcripts from group interview and memory work involved discourse and narrative analysis to unravel the construction of values, beliefs and identities associated with Extreme Metal music subculture 'membership' and Extreme Metal music fandom.

Discourse analysis is a name given to a variety of different approaches to the study of texts. What the approaches share is "a rejection of the realist notion that language is simply a neutral means of reflecting or describing the world, and a conviction in the central importance of discourse in constructing social life" (Gill, 2000: 172). According to Foucault (1972), discourse is a form of practice that constructs our thinking and actions; each discourse already has its own set of 'rules' that we take up in our interactions. My research assumed that discourse is a form of social practice. It can be argued that "discourses regulate and control our self-images and actions, we are constructed by discourse" (Wodak, 1997: 13). Identities are produced in and through discourse and can be seen to influence the way we view and form identities (Widdecombe and Woofit, 1995). Discourse analysis can therefore be understood as "an attempt to identify and describe regularities in the methods used by participants as they construct the discourse through which they establish the character of their actions and beliefs in the course of interaction" (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984: 14). Through such an approach, the researcher must also question his/her common-sense assumptions, actions, interactions, and production of text (Gill, 2000). It is therefore a reflective form of analysis.

Narrative practices are an important way in which we construct meanings and fashion our identities (Atkinson, 1998). Narrative practices are also a reflective process (Miller, 1991; Plummer, 1995). Narrative analysis moves the focus of attention from what actually happened to how people make sense of what happened. Narrative analysis can be applied to conventional interview

transcripts to uncover the stories interviewees are telling the researcher (Riessman, 2004) alongside the narrative structures and genre conventions that construct subject positions (Redman, 1999). My own narrative analysis of data accordingly involved the identification of shared narratives, story themes, plots and conventions within the participants' conversation and memory work stories.

The transcripts that resulted from the research group meetings were manually coded in relation to emerging themes, common narratives and discourses. Rather than using qualitative data analysis programmes, such as NVivo, I preferred to analyse the transcripts in print form adopting an approach of mapping themes and analysing the text in a way that worked successfully for me. Although computer analysis has many advantages such as the ability to store and retrieve large amounts of data and cut text, I had struggled looking at the transcripts for a long length of time on the computer screen. I also wished to view the data in their natural context. By manually coding the data, I was able to spread out transcripts, view cut text in context and view the transcripts for longer lengths of time. Manually coding data involved highlighting and colour-coding common themes, narratives and discourses. Some of these had already emerged prior to the transcribing process through my observations of the research group discussion that I had recorded in my field notes and my initial reflections about my own experiences of Extreme Metal subculture. During the transcription process, I added field notes, in particular any observations of group interactions, the group's shared opinions, and details

about the respondents that I had discovered (i.e. age, profession, and education). After coding each transcript separately in relation to my initial ideas about themes and the common discourses and narratives within the data, I then revisited all of the transcripts to clarify the commonality of my respondents' experiences of Extreme Metal music and subculture. Finally, I considered how the interactions of my respondents could additionally say something about their collective identity. It was, therefore, through a process of repeated manual coding that I came to identify the recurring themes, common narrative repertoires and registers, discourses and performances, that emerged from my respondents' conversation and written stories.

Ethical considerations

Throughout the research, I aimed to comply with the highest ethical standards, I committed to informed consent and to protect the participants[56]. I also intended to be reflexive, and be honest about the research. I planned my research with the view to reduce the power relations between the researcher and the researched by placing myself as participant under scrutiny, through adopting an approach to interviews that avoided a formal structure and by encouraging participants to direct discussions. Despite such attempts, the research group often reinforced my position as researcher. I entered the research group with the intention of explaining the themes I wanted to cover but also making it clear that I was not entirely sure of what would be eventually written or which themes would dominate. This enabled discussions

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[56] I consulted the British Sociological Association's 'Statement of Ethical Practice' and the ESRC 'Research Ethics Framework'.

to be broad and allowed scope for the group to talk about what interested them. Despite efforts to even the balance of power, the potential for exploitation always remains (Elliott, 2005). By not giving a detailed explanation of my research, I left the research group open to the potential for exploitation. There was a great deal of trust placed on me by the research group to not misrepresent them. The process of analysis and the subsequent written text is an interpretation of the researcher, one cannot be sure that the researcher's interpretation of the research will concur with that of the participants of the research. To use participants' understandings of the researcher's views of the research data is, therefore, a sound way to assess the reliability of discourse analysis (Potter, 1996). After my initial transcribing and planning of the themes I would address in the thesis, I met with the research group to disseminate my ideas about the content of the research. The key themes were addressed and I showed some examples of the coding of the transcripts of the memory work and group interviews. I felt this could potentially limit conflict of interpretation and, in addition, make the group feel I was invested in their friendship and grateful for their commitment to the research. I also agreed to give each member a copy of the full thesis to acknowledge his/her contributions.

The main problem to emerge was retaining the promise of anonymity and protecting my respondents' privacy. In the transcribing of interviews, I used pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities and location. Although I can ensure my commitment to anonymity, I cannot ensure the commitment of the group members to informed consent (Parker and Tritter, 2006). The group

context of the research means that I cannot ensure that participants' identities will remain undisclosed or that the views of participants will not further be discussed with non-group members. Group discussion may therefore have "consequences beyond the temporal and social confines of the focus group itself" (Bloor et al., 2001: 25). There is little the researcher can do to manage such interactions, suggesting that such a methodology may not have been so suited to areas of research in which participants contribute very personal and private information in which anonymity is seen as paramount.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to provide a sense of the researcher-researched relationship, the basis for my methodological decisions and the process that I followed in conducting this study. I have shown that although having some unexpected outcomes and responses, my research methodology was developed to produce a wealth of rich and interesting data. My methodological approach of research group interaction combined qualitative methods to produce dynamic responses and narrative rich data. I used a multi-method approach of semi-structured interviews, memory work, media elicitation and music elicitation due to their potential in producing data that could reveal something of the experience of music subculture and the processes of becoming and being a subcultural 'member'; insight into everyday life and kinship; and the feeling structures of music genre fandom.

I am positioned in certain respects as 'insider researcher', and therefore should endeavour to conduct reflexive research. Although this cannot remove power relations, it places the researcher's taken for granted assumptions under scrutiny and as a subject of research. Although attempts were made to get the research group involved in analysing their stories and descriptions, the final analysis was my own as researcher. This centred on the discourses and narratives within the interview/memory work data.

In what follows, I attempt to examine the research group's common characteristics, practices and speech; shared experiences; and collective attachments that can be related to the members' Extreme Metal fandom and subcultural participation. In Chapter 5, I attempt to explore the research group's collective habitus and distinctions of taste. In Chapter 6, I consider the labour-learning processes in acquiring and defending that habitus. In Chapter 7, I attempt to ascertain my respondents' shared speech, narrative and performative practices. Lastly, in Chapter 8, I focus upon the role feeling plays in the research group members' relationship with Extreme Metal music genre and subculture. The thesis explores the subcultural nature of the research group's experiences of Extreme Metal and how they construct Extreme Metal identity.

Chapter 5

"You Can Find Value in something that Most People wouldn't be Able to Find

Value in": Extreme Metal Habitus

Despite current shifts to the 'postsubcultural' study of youth and music

cultures, that focus upon the playful adoption of styles and neo-tribal identities

(Muggleton, 1997; Bennett, 1999); I have argued in Chapter 3, that music

cultures might still be considered in relation to subcultural theory because

many display a strong sense of hierarchy, authenticity, commitment, and

collective values. I introduced a revised approach toward subculture that views

it as emerging out of music fans' interactions and imaginations whilst

providing structure and meaningful identification for them. In order to consider

what constitutes the Extreme Metal subculture and what subcultural

membership entails for my respondents, this chapter focuses upon their shared

practices, ideals and behaviours. Drawing on Bourdieu (1984), I suggest that

for my respondents the adoption of a collective identity involves shared

habitus: the acquirement of, investment in and display of subcultural capitals,

values, and shared distinctions of taste.

In order to illustrate how my respondents displayed shared habitus, this chapter

begins with a consideration of their display of subcultural capitals that united

their identities as Extreme Metal fans particularly via their subcultural

knowledge, subcultural style, and subcultural activity. I then discuss my

respondents' values in relation to their emphasis upon connoisseurship, and a

common work ethic. I finally address the distinctions of taste made by my respondents particularly against an imagined 'other', which serve to create subcultural identification. I argue that distinctions are, therefore, positioned as forms of fan identity work, by which the collective is identified and contained. The research groups' collective habitus identifies their participation in a taste culture, which is constructed and reinforced by their interactions. Prior to embarking on this discussion, I begin with a reflection on how Bourdieuian concepts can be adopted and applied to this case study of Extreme Metal fans.

<u>Bourdieu and Extreme Habitus</u>

A music subculture can be equated with Bourdieu's (1984) notion of 'field'. A field is a hierarchically structured social space with people occupying various positions determined by their shared habitus and possession of capitals. The value of a capital depends on the field one is in: "the same practices may receive opposite meanings and values in different fields, in different configurations or in opposing sectors of the same field" (Bourdieu, 1984: 94). For example, one's higher education may have little value compared to displaying 'hip' behaviour in a room full of popular music fans. As a field, the Extreme Metal subculture can, thereby, be considered to have its own system of capitals, values and dispositions; a distinct network of people with shared habitus. For Bourdieu (1984), habitus relates to our dispositions and values, our internalised rules that are socially produced and can determine the actions we take. Our habitus is determined by the capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) we possess and are expressed in our distaste or our 'distinctions

of taste'. Such concepts, therefore, provide a tool through which one can understand the cultural hierarchies, exclusions and the difference in people's dispositions one finds within different fields.

I am adapting Bourdieuian concepts to apply to the popular culture sphere. This is in direct opposition to Bourdieu's use of the terms and argument that our possession and value of capitals is related to our social class and education within 'official' culture. I consider them 'open' concepts for critical appropriation that lend themselves to an analysis of music genre fandom and subcultural identity. Bourdieu accepted his "concepts have no definition other than systematic ones, and are designed to be put to work empirically in systematic fashion" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 96). Although Bourdieu's focus was on 'legitimate' taste and 'official' culture, one can adapt his concepts to restricted fields such as subculture. Several studies of fandom and music culture have adapted Bourdieuian concepts to illustrate the hierarchical and structured nature of fan and music culture identities that are based around knowledge, style, interactions and practices (Fiske, 1992; Thornton, 1995; Hodkinson, 2002; Vroomen, 2002; MacRae, 2004; Kahn-Harris, 2007). It could be argued that the Extreme Metal fan, as subcultural member, possesses values and dispositions and makes distinctions that locate him/her as 'insider'. Through an analysis of the research group interviews and memory work conducted with my respondents, I maintain that the notions of music subculture membership and kinship are created through shared habitus and distinctions of

my respondents who are positioned as subcultural participants. It is to my respondents' shared capitals that I now turn.

<u>Shared Capitals</u>

A person's habitus and their distinctions of taste, Bourdieu (1984) claims, are created through the possession of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital. 'Economic capital' can be related to one's wealth; 'cultural capital' is a form of knowledge that is acquired through education and upbringing; social capital' relates to our social networks or connections; and 'symbolic capital' is any of the above forms of capital, that function as an embodiment of cultural value and that give power to the bearer within a specific field. According to Bourdieu, 'cultural capital' gives status to the holder and enables one to participate fully in the cultural field. Without the cultural capital to understand 'art' or certain genres of music, the viewer, or listener, cannot make sense of what is happening: "A beholder who lacks the specific code feels lost in a chaos of sounds and rhythms, colours and lines, without rhyme or reason" (Bourdieu, 1984: 2). To understand Extreme Metal music, therefore, one must possess the cultural capital to make sense of what is happening, in what may seem a "chaos of sounds". The terms 'popular cultural capital' and 'subcultural capital' are used to describe the forms of cultural capital valued in the specific fields of fan and music cultures that serve to communicate social prestige and 'authentic' collective identities (Fiske, 1992; Thornton, 1995). The term 'subcultural capital' is used by Thornton (1995) to refer to the cultural capital that is valued within club cultures. For Thornton (1995: 11), subcultural capital

is displayed through such things as knowledge, style, language and 'hipness':

"just as cultural capital is personified in 'good' manners and urbane

conversation, so subcultural capital is embodied in the form of being 'in the

know' using (but not overusing) current slang". The clubber's possession of

subcultural capital is thus used to make demarcations of insider and outsider

and produce hierarchies of authenticity and taste that indicate status and power.

There is a need to possess cultural competence in order to understand both

Extreme Metal music and the subculture that surrounds it. Extreme Metal fans,

therefore, may have their own form of subcultural capitals that serve to

construct Extreme Metal dispositions and to display status within the culture.

Within my research group discussions, I identified key capitals that my

respondents shared. These can be characterised in three areas: (1) the

knowledge and expertise displayed through interactions with other fans and

their music collections; (2) Extreme Metal style, which transmitted 'hipness'

via the symbolic capital inherent in dress codes; and (3) Extreme Metal

activities that served to create social capital whilst offering an opportunity to

display subcultural capital.

Subcultural Knowledge

My respondents placed a high level of importance upon the need to possess

knowledge and expertise related to Extreme Metal music, subculture and

behaviour to gain the respect of other Extreme Metal fans. Such knowledge,

which included Extreme Metal music history, genres, underground bands,

instruments, music labels, terminologies and shared opinions, can be

interpreted as forms of subcultural capital, which (if acquired) give status and validation to the Extreme Metal fan. The research group collectively criticised other fans' lack of such subcultural knowledge. For example, Liam described evidence of such shortcomings, which he had come across on an Internet message board:

> Liam: Someone posted on April fools day something about *Burzum*[57] playing in [names local live venue/pub] "Oh yeah, I booked *Burzum* to play a gig at [local live venue/pub]". And there were loads of people going "ooh fucking hell, I love *Burzum*, I'm definitely going to be there". [Group laughter] I just thought 'you guys are so sad; you just don't know do you?'

By failing to know that the artist behind the band *Burzum*, Varg Vikernes, was serving a period of imprisonment for murder, these comments were deemed naïve. The research group's agreement (here demonstrated in their collective laughter) also distinguishes them as having a greater knowledge and, therefore, higher status (in their eyes at least) in the fan community. Knowledge, therefore, signified authentic fan status, for my respondents, in interactions with other Extreme Metal fans.

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[57] *Burzum* was a prominent band within the early Norwegian Black Metal scene. It is the musical project of Varg Vikernes (alias. Count Grishnackh) who was convicted in 1993 for the murder of Oysten Aarseth (Euronymous) a member of the Black Metal band *Mayhem*.

It was additionally alleged by my respondents that a fan's knowledge and expertise were displayed via the record/CD collection. Like other music subcultures, CDs are collected, traded and shared with others in the community. The respondents valued their music collections and, I included, constantly added to them, waiting for mail order[58] albums to be delivered and sharing music between one another. Discussion prior to and after research group meetings was often centred on hearing and talking about newly acquired CD albums. The Extreme Metal music collection is built up over a length of time and it involves economic capital alongside the cultural capitals in understanding the genre and what makes an impressive collection. Music fans can exhibit their extensive knowledge of music through the ownership of a large music collection. The music collection of Extreme Metal fans, therefore, serves as symbolic capital, signifying to others the fan's subcultural capitals. According to Straw (1997), it is generally male fans that collect Rock music and build up an extensive knowledge of it in this way: he argues that by not taking part in such rituals/practices, females may fail to acquire the same level of knowledge, which can serve to exclude and limit their activities in music scenes. This argument may not be applied to the female members of my own research group. Female members, Chloe and I, also placed great importance upon our personal music collections. It does indicate, however, that those who fail to build an extensive knowledge of Extreme Metal music may run the risk of not being accepted into the community. Many of the subcultural capitals present in the Extreme Metal scene (in particular the development of scenic

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[58] Mail ordering is a central way in which Extreme Metal fans buy CD albums and merchandise. This is because some Extreme Metal CDs are only obtained through the record label or specialist shops, because they are on small independent labels.

knowledge), Kahn-Harris (2007: 122) argues, are achieved through certain

forms of subcultural work and demonstrations of commitment, which he

renames 'mundane subcultural capital':

> [M]undane subcultural capital is oriented towards the
>
> possibilities of the collective puissance that is produced as a
>
> collective result of the mundane efforts of the totality of scene
>
> members. It is a form of capital accrued through a sustained
>
> investment in the myriad practices through which the scene is
>
> reproduced. It is accrued through self-sacrifice, commitment
>
> and hard work.

The collecting of music is highlighted by Kahn-Harris (2007) to be a key

method of displaying 'mundane subcultural capital'. The effort to gain and

display knowledge and expertise, therefore, signifies the fan's work and

commitment, which serves to bolster the maintenance of hierarchy within

Extreme Metal subculture.

Subcultural Style

A key means by which research group members displayed their shared habitus

was via dress code and style. Extreme Metal uses images of extremity, such as

violence and hyper-masculinity that are adopted in the community's style of

dress, such as the wearing of bullet belts, corpse-paint, and leather that seem to

appear as 'spectacular' forms of subcultural style. Yet, it is the band T-shirt

that my respondents considered to locate them as an 'insider' or subcultural member, and define others as outsiders. The central cultural artefact of the Metal T-shirt is characterised by a visible band logo (logos often prove hard to read but are known by their distinctive design), and are often accompanied by the album artwork of the band concerned that may depict images of death, violence, and the occult. Brown (2005) illustrates that the Metal T-shirt is a key point of identification in Metal culture, which serves to communicate and embody subcultural membership and involve collective acts of consumption. The Metal T-shirt was a point of identification and communication for my respondents; it served as symbolic capital that communicated the wearer's subcultural capital (his/her knowledge of Extreme Metal music, and knowledge of what would be perceived as underground, appropriate and 'cool'). In Ben's memory work story about a time when style was important to him, he described the potential merits of shared style and the communicative power of the T-shirt:

> Ben: When I first started going to rock clubs aged about 15 or 16, image was very important to me because it was at the peak of Nu-Metal[59] and wearing a T-shirt of a cool underground band was like wearing a badge to tell you who would be worth talking to in a club. Which seems a bit sad, but was true. I remember meeting lots of people including the drummer of my current band just through

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[59] Nu-Metal is a music genre, which emerged in the mid 1990s. The genre fused the sound of Heavy Metal genres with such influences as Grunge and Hip Hop.

wearing T-shirts of bands, and going up to people and
talking about the band. It was a really exciting time for
me, because I was discovering so many new
underground bands, and every week someone was
wearing a T-shirt I didn't know or someone new was
wearing a T-shirt of a band and I'd talk to them about it.
It felt like being a member of a clandestine secret society
because most people were wearing *Korn*[60] T-shits and
there was a group of us huddled in the corner drinking
pints and wearing Death Metal T-shirts and we were all
united about how much we hated the popular bands of
the time and felt we were cooler than everyone else
there, I expect. Meeting people through them and me
wearing T-shirts got me into new bands, trading tapes
and CDs with people. I was going to gigs, buying new
shirts, discovering new bands. It was always a kind of
competition to see who could wear a shirt that no one
knew.

Although this was an early experience of subcultural style, which Ben appears
to want distance from by describing his actions as "a bit sad", it demonstrates
how the communication of taste through the everyday apparel of T-Shirts may
be associated with being part of something 'underground', and, for him at least,

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[60] *Korn* is a band associated with the emergence of the Nu-Metal genre.

led to further involvement in Extreme Metal subculture. Ben describes his experiences at this time as "like being part of a clandestine secret society" where the concealed nature of knowing the correct codes (in this case band names and band logos) provided a sense of belonging. The T-shirt therefore communicated taste to other Extreme Metal fans. My respondents placed importance on performing style at the public live event. Wearing the 'correct' T-Shirt at the live event appeared key to displaying one's habitus, something which the group described as an accumulation of "scene points":

> Liam: Well, I was well pleased when I got that *Obituary*[61] top [T-shirt] because it was well old looking and I thought that definitely gave me scene points. Whereas I didn't wear this [*Centurion's Ghost*[62]] T-shirt at the [*Centurion's Ghost*] gig the other week because I thought that it would, I would have lost scene points, wearing the T-shirt of a band I'd gone to see. Even though this T-shirt is an old Centurion's Ghost T-shirt from before their first album so, therefore, technically worth more ['scene points'].

> Chloe: So if you wore it for the next one [gig], you might get scene points whereas if you'd worn it to that one...

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[61] *Obituary* is an influential Death Metal band from Florida.
[62] *Centurion's Ghost* is an underground Doom Metal band from the UK.

Liam: [Interrupting] Yes more acceptable.

Chloe: Or if you wore it to a different Doom show, more scene
points again.

Ben: Yeah.

Liam: Random.

The respondents knew that their choice of T-shirt transmitted both positive and negative information about their fandom to other fans. The value of the T-shirt hinged largely on the genre of gig, the perceived 'underground-ness' of the band, and the age of the T-shirt itself (which may transmit one's own length of time in the subculture, or dedication to following the band). By describing this status acquiring process as the gaining of "scene points", the group were indicating that authenticity was both acquired and transmitted via style. They were, therefore, displaying their subcultural capital through their clothing choices.

The wearing of band T-shirts by my respondents served to distinguish between 'insider' and 'outsider' within the Extreme Metal subculture. Liam described the potential problem with wearing a T-shirt deemed non-Extreme Metal:

Liam: You can easily make a big gap [between yourself and

other fans]. Just by wearing the wrong T-shirt can make

them [other fans] prejudiced against you. I would have a

worse opinion of someone who came to a Death Metal

gig wearing a *Slipknot*[63] T-shirt than someone who

didn't bother turning up

By wearing a non Extreme Metal band T-shirt, and more importantly one which features the motif of what is considered to be a popular mainstream Metal band (i.e. *Slipknot*), one is deemed to have failed to recognise the common codes of the Extreme Metal subculture. Liam locates this as a greater 'offence' than failing to attend a live event, (which was also viewed by respondents as key to subcultural participation). Similar distinctions were made by the respondents in relation to the wearing of T-shirts of bands associated with Extreme Metal but deemed, by them as a group, to be too popular or mainstream:

Ben: Say I came up to you in the street and stole your T-shirt

off your back.

Chloe: A mugging situation.

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[63] *Slipknot* is a Nu-Metal band that adopts Extreme Metal aesthetics in their music such as their use of double-bass pedal drumming and grunting vocals.

Ben: In [the] city centre and then Chloe met you two minutes

later and she's like "I've got this *Trivium*[64] T-shirt"

Would you put it on?

Liam: I wouldn't wear it.

Ben: You would get on the train or bus topless?

Liam: I think so, yes.

Ben: [Laughs]

Liam: The same as I wouldn't wear one with [the] politics of a

party I didn't support.

Here, Liam's final explanation indicates the significant role of the T-shirt in transmitting information to others about oneself. For Liam, this particular T-shirt (of the band *Trivium*) has attached meanings, which he would wish to distance himself from, and his attitude suggests that he would evaluate Extreme Metal fans 'authentic' taste in this way.

The research group members' distinctions with regards to style and the Metal T-shirt, held clear gendered differences. Female members of Extreme Metal

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[64] *Trivium* is a Metal band from Florida that has received recent popularity in the UK, with a large amount of Metal press coverage.

subculture were perceived by the group to be more able to take on styles that varied from the band T-shirt, particularly the wearing of black garments and more gothic and rock fashions. Furthermore, the way in which these fashions (including band T-shirts) were adopted by female members Chloe and I, appeared to differ from the reasons given during male members' discussions of style:

> NA: I'm often the one not wearing a T-shirt at all because of my small size. I suppose having tattoos kind of identifies me as a Metaller without the T-shirt, you know, people assume you're part of it anyway.

> Chloe: With me, when I pick a T-shirt it is not about 'is this underground enough?' It is more 'does this T-shirt look good on me tonight? Am I in the mood for this tonight?' It is a lot more personal and girly. I'm sure there's a better way of putting it.

In this discussion, the band T-shirt was not given the same importance by the female group members as male respondents gave it. I replace the importance of the T-shirt as a point of identification with the tattoo. The tattoo is a permanent marker upon the body and can be seen to symbolise an assumed permanence of identity that acts as a form of signification to others "as a Metaller". In Sweetman's (1999) consideration of his respondents' explanations of being

tattooed, he highlighted that permanence was part of the appeal. The tattoos'
permanence has been conflated with anti-fashion because it is assumed to have
fixed meaning (Curry, 1993; Polhemus and Proctor, 1978). Chloe describes an
alternative method of choice in deciding which T-shirt to wear, one that
involves mood and attractiveness, which she places as "girly", which also
indicates that she considers that the "is this underground enough" decision-
making is a typically male distinction. Despite this difference in style choice,
the group discussions indicated female members' style, and hence status, as
subcultural members was evaluated differently:

    Chloe: I find I judge women more harshly than I judge blokes,

           which is fairly unfortunate.

    Ben: I think that is a natural result from there being girls into

           it [Extreme Metal] only because of their boyfriends and

           [who] drop out of it as soon as they stop going out [with

           their boyfriends].

    Liam: [To Chloe] Do you think you have to work hard to

           combat that image?

    Chloe: Sometimes. Yes. I think it's not that we are trying to

           prove anything to any blokes. But I often find that there

is a bit of one-upmanship of women who go to gigs
sometimes.

These statements about women seem to contain severe judgments. Ben treats women with suspicion in their motives for being present in the Extreme Metal subculture ("that it is a natural result from there being girls into it only because of their boyfriends"). Chloe considers that the seeking of approval of women by women is separate from male members of the subculture. Chloe's statement "it's not that we are trying to prove anything to any blokes", indicates that, for Chloe, such competitiveness and judgments of women by women may be fuelled by the desire to signify to one another that they are fans and not 'girlfriends' and thus prove their subcultural embedded-ness. Despite this implied gender difference, Chloe and myself also took part in judging other subcultural participants' status in relation to the T-shirt being worn.

Style therefore appears as a key way in which my respondents displayed subcultural capital and status. It served to symbolise their sense of hierarchy, (which appears to be in some respects gendered) within the Extreme Metal subculture.

Subcultural Activity

Subcultural activities such as the live performances of Extreme Metal bands, brought together fans, exposed them to the subculture's fashion and activities, and developed the fan's knowledge of bands and musicians. The Extreme

Metal gig was expressed by Liam to be a central subcultural activity with accompanying capital:

> Liam: I was going to say it's like earning your stripes or
>
> proving you've got it, which isn't what I set out to do;
>
> but it steps up an extra level from buying the CD.

The term "earning your stripes" indicates Liam has a sense of labour attached to subcultural activity. Attending a live Extreme Metal event may "step up an extra level" because the fan moves into a social arena in which subcultural capital must be displayed. A fan's commitment to a subcultural identity and display of subcultural capital may only be recognised when the fan interacts and participates in subcultural activities (i.e. at gigs, clubs or on the Internet) or is visible to other fans. Interaction with other fans, for example, was seen by Chloe as something which made her part of her local 'scene':

> Chloe: [To Liam] For ages we didn't know anyone else into
>
> Extreme Metal here [in this city] did we? Because we
>
> were outside of the scene.

> Liam: Yeah, although we still went to gigs and things.

The activities, participation and socialising that took place at the Extreme Metal gig gave Chloe and Liam an awareness of being part of their local

subculture, and a potential opportunity to gain social capital. For Bourdieu (1993: 143), social capital involves "contacts and group memberships which, through the accumulation of exchanges, obligations and shared identities, provides actual or potential support and access to valued resources". Possessing social capital additionally aided the respondents' acquirement of subcultural capital. An increase in social capital accordingly reinforced them as active members, increasing their own sense of collective membership.

My respondents displayed their shared habitus through their possession of (sub)cultural, symbolic and social capitals. Research group discussion illustrated collective values and judgments in relation to Extreme Metal knowledge, dress codes and activities that constructed Extreme Metal subcultural identity and hierarchy. Throughout their descriptions of what they deemed important in their display of subcultural capital and their judgments of other fans was the labour involved in the processes of acquiring and displaying subcultural capital. The 'extreme habitus' of my respondents was furthermore characterised and communicated by their shared values, seen in the similar opinions, attitudes and outlooks within group discussion. Although positioned as fans of a popular culture form, my respondents spoke as connoisseurs, with refined taste and artistic judgment and expressed a work ethic through emphasis upon labour and investment. I now turn to my respondents' shared values and identity work, which further indicate my respondents' management and construction of Extreme Metal identity.

<u>Shared Values</u>

<u>Extreme Metal 'Connoisseurship'</u>

In Chapter 1, I claimed that the character of Extreme Metal was related to its pursuit of extremity. The 'extreme', I argued, has become a common characteristic of recent cultural shifts in popular culture and media; it can thus be associated with a 'low' cultural form. In Chapter 2, I highlighted that Heavy Metal has been positioned by academic research as macho, working class and part of 'low' popular mainstream culture. I also illustrated that fandom studies have shown that the distinction between 'low' and 'high' culture has been blurred with many fan cultures adopting notions of 'high culture' to celebrate traditionally considered 'low' cultural forms. In Metal studies, this can be seen in Walser's (1993) emphasis on Metal fans' valuing of musical virtuosity. The research group discussions indicated that my respondents had shared attitudes and values that were associated with 'high' cultural connoisseurship[65]. The connoisseur of art is associated with distanced judgment, which is shown through expertise and knowledge alongside a reserved and unaffected disposition (Nead, 1996). The object of the connoisseur's contemplation is one of 'high' culture. According to Bourdieu (1984), 'high' culture denies natural enjoyment in favour of distance and reason. In consequence, art should not be judged by the viewer's reaction but rather his/her evaluation of its execution. Previous studies of fandom have often concentrated upon fan attachment with

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[65] This may be a reflection of the prevalence of university educated participants in the research group, and also the higher proportion of middle class and university educated fans within the Extreme Metal subculture. On the other hand, it may reflect an attempt to distance Extreme Metal music and subculture from associations with 'low' culture and the 'mainstream'.

the 'artist'.[66] For the connoisseur (and indeed my respondents), however, the

focus of attachment is art. My respondents placed importance upon musical

virtuosity, intelligence, expert knowledge, and distanced judgment in their

evaluations of journalism, music and live performance of music, which

mirrored connoisseurship of art. Extreme Metal was, therefore, situated at a

collision between 'high' and 'low' culture. Connoisseurship served to

legitimize Extreme Metal's profane imagery whilst reinforcing its position

against 'the mainstream'.[67]

In the fourth research group meeting, media elicitation was utilised as a group

activity. In our previous meeting, I had asked group members to bring with

them to the next session recent Extreme Metal media that they both liked and

disliked to discuss within the group. When looking through recent Extreme

Metal music magazines and fanzines[68], my respondents' criticisms centred

upon the failure of many of the journalists concerned to demonstrate their

intellect and expert knowledge of music. For instance, Ben used such criticisms

when he commented upon an Extreme Metal music festival review featured in

the Extreme Metal magazine '*Terrorizer*'[69]:

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[66] In Chapter 2, I have discussed the limited focus of fan studies on the fan attachment to music artists rather than a music genre.

[67] Furthermore, by associating Extreme Metal with musical virtuosity and intellectual properties, Extreme Metal may also be distanced from Heavy Metal and its association with the mainstream.

[68] The magazines the group considered were issues of *Terrorizer*, *Zero Tolerance* and one issue of the fanzine *Morbid Tales*.

[69] 'Bloodstock '06' in Terrorizer, December 2006, pp. 84-85.

> Ben: He's talking about how much he hates festivals, Pot
>
> Noodle[70], you know, he's talking about how festivals are
>
> commercialised, which is reasonable enough but, you
>
> know, he says about five words about the bands. He
>
> talks about how he sneaked some alcohol into the
>
> festival. Great. Then he says he can't remember seeing
>
> *Onslaught*.[71] Most of this is about him and it's just
>
> bollocks basically. In my opinion, he takes very little
>
> time talking about the music and makes stupid
>
> comments about lots of the bands.

Ben identifies that the journalist does not make informed comments about the bands' performances at the festival. This is of particular annoyance to Ben because he considers the band *Onslaught* worthy of attention. Ben also criticises the journalist's narcissism, which is deemed key to the articles failure ("Most of this is about him and it's bollocks basically"). It is the journalist's failure to place importance upon music and to write an intelligent review of it that Ben is therefore disapproving of (although whilst doing so, Ben uses the 'low' cultural language of a swearword to express his distaste). In a previous group discussion, Nathan also expressed a particular expectation of Extreme Metal journalism:

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[70] Pot Noodle is a brand of instant noodles. UK music festivals often have food stalls selling the brand.
[71] *Onslaught* is an English Thrash Metal band, active between 1983 and 1991, and reformed in 2004.

Nathan: You get the reader's poll[72] in *Terrorizer*. It's supposed

to be a serious magazine, and they have 'Most shaggable

female' category. Come on; don't dumb it [the

magazine] down.

Nathan clearly wants to distance himself from something he regards as part of lowbrow mass media, which he characterises by its objectification of female celebrities. He is clearly annoyed that a piece of subcultural media fails to retain a serious approach ("Come on, don't dumb it down"). This valuing of reserved, intelligent and serious journalism, therefore, highlighted a shared identification of my respondents with the connoisseur of 'high' culture.

According to Bourdieu (1991: 364), the connoisseur of sport has a differing perception to the public: "The 'connoisseur' has schemes of perception and appreciation which enable him to see, to perceive a necessity where the outsider sees only violence and confusion". If this perception is applied to Extreme Metal music instead of sport, the Extreme Metal fan, as connoisseur, can be seen to appreciate the art of music; whereas the non-Extreme Metal fan might only react to what can be described as the violence and confusion of the Extreme Metal sound. The fan, as connoisseur, values the virtuosity of Extreme Metal music, as seen in Rob's comments on the importance he placed on "musicianship":

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[72] The readers' poll is decided through readers' annual completion of a form supplied within the magazine which asks readers choices for particular categories such as 'best band' or 'best vocalist', the most popular choices are then published in the annual article.

Rob: Musicianship is very important… I'm a guitarist and it is the most boring instrument to play because everybody does it and everybody these days is in a band, but there is a difference between, say, somebody just playing in a band and [somebody] being a musician. It's a big difference. Being a musician is more artistic and music should be an art form.

Rob makes the distinction between "somebody just being in a band" and the "musician". The musician is placed as a producer of "art" rather than popular music. The musician is given a specific identity amidst the mass of "anybody" and "everybody". Rob's statement also implies that he is placing himself in the role of musician and artist, and avoids being placed as just another "boring" guitarist. Furthermore, my respondents celebrated the musical originality, and intelligence of Extreme Metal bands and musicians in their evaluation of the music they enjoyed:

Rob: These guys [*Eyehategod*[73]] were quite a pioneering band from New Orleans. Sound wise I like the dirty, gritty sound that they have. Really, it is quite sort of aggressive isn't it? In a lazy sort of way.

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[73] *Eyehategod* is a Sludge Metal band from New Orleans characterised by detuned and distorted Blues riffs and harsh vocals. Sludge Metal is a genre that fuses Doom Metal with Hardcore.

Ben: I don't particularly identify with their themes of what

they're singing about, but I think they do it in an

intelligent way – good lyrics.

Rob: Yeah they are clever, and the vocalist was a journalist

and he's written a book of poetry. Quite intelligent,

really.

Ben and Rob emphasise that the intelligence of the lyrics/musicians are

important aspects of the band's appeal. They use 'high' culture values to

evaluate Extreme Metal music, which would normally be considered as a 'low'

cultural form.

The positioning of the Extreme Metal fan as a connoisseur of 'high' culture

contrasts greatly with the imagery, sound and physicality of Extreme Metal

music. Extreme Metal connoisseurship can, therefore, be interpreted as a

managed identity. It involves a significant amount of work in retaining the

ideal of intelligence and a distanced disposition in relation to Extreme Metal

music. Respondents' 'high' culture values clashed with the group's physical

practices associated with Extreme Metal. I used music elicitation in two of the

research group meetings to aid discussion of the character of Extreme Metal

music and our affective attachments to it. When Chloe chose to play an

Obituary song to the group, she characterised it as less intelligent to other

group member's choices:

> Chloe: Right, I'm going to go from the rather intelligent of you
>
> lot to something a bit less intelligent, you know…a bit
>
> *Obituary.*

After the music had been played, Chloe explained *Obituary*'s specific appeal in relation to physical practice:

> Chloe: Yeah, and you can headbang to it all the way through
>
> from beginning to end without really even having to
>
> change pace too much. You can just plant yourself on
>
> the dancefloor and go for it and I've done that.

Chloe's comments establish an association between the physical practices associated with Metal music (i.e. headbanging) and unintelligence. According to Nead (1996), when viewing the nude body in art, the connoisseur's body is seen to get in the way, disabling distanced judgment. Similarly, if one considers the body's response to music (i.e. responses to rhythm and beat and the physical practice of headbanging), to retain reserved distance and to remain unaffected proves difficult. Although music (and particularly live music with its emphasis on crowd interaction) creates this inconsistency, my respondents also gave accounts of managing their physical practices. For example, Nathan described avoiding physical practice at Extreme Metal gigs:

> Nathan: I think you go to gigs sometimes and you're perfectly
>
> content on standing back and watching, and have your

own little personal space and just watch what's going

on, and then someone walks past acting like a nutter.

Here, Nathan avoids physical practice because it enables viewing. He views the physical fan as a "nutter", uncontrolled and absurd. Physical practices had to be approved as appropriate; my respondents had many debates on the values underpinning the 'rules' of the live event. Liam was the most vocal in his dislike of certain behaviours and in particular, stage diving[74]:

Liam: I hate it [stage diving] with a passion and I think anyone

stage diving should be thrown out of the venue. It really,

really annoys me. I can't see how, in any way, it is tied

in with the music. I think it's just someone who wants to

get up on stage and draw some attention to themselves. I

just really hate it. People just get up [on stage] fuck

about, and it's always the same three or four blokes as

well, again and again and again. I think you're not

listening to the band, you're just wanting to get up on

stage, jump off then get on stage, jump off, "look at me

I'm on stage", jump off.

Liam places stage-divers as self-obsessed, and failing to appreciate the music. He cannot understand the motivation because he "can't see how in anyway it is

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[74] Stage-diving is the practice of a fan getting onto the stage and jumping off, arms spread, into the crowd, with the intention that the crowd will catch him/her.

tied in with the music". Herein lies the belief that the fan will not be respected if s/he affects others' appreciation of the performance. These accounts highlight that the research group viewed the physical practices associated with Extreme Metal as something which should be managed, controlled and appropriate, most importantly not affecting one's appreciation of the music.

By being on the edge of a body of music, Extreme Metal can be seen as a meeting place of creativity and profanity. An emphasis upon distanced judgment of music and virtuosity is therefore indicative of the research group's attempts to define boundaries, and to position Extreme Metal as a legitimate genre of fandom. An emphasis upon distanced judgment of music and intelligence can be seen to place Extreme Metal as culturally legitimate by distancing it from allegations of profanity in favour of art and musicianship. This also serves to distance the Extreme Metal fan (and subculture) from the perceived 'mainstream' and mass popular culture. This is similar to the activities of 'cult fans', which tend to communicate social and cultural capital defined against the mainstream (Sandvoss, 2005). Through the commercial mainstream being defined as conformist, the label 'cult' gives cultural legitimacy to texts ranging from kitsch to graphic violence or hardcore pornography (Jancovich, 2002). Similarly, the separation of tastes from the mainstream was a key distinction made by my respondents. For example, Ben and Liam did so to reinforce their superior sense of taste:

Ben: Do you feel elite when you listen to something extreme
do you think? […] Well, because you can find value in
something that most people wouldn't be able to find
value in.

Liam: Yeah, I think so. [Pauses] Yeah, to bring yourself
outside of the herd mentality, isn't it? You are able to
see something. If you can find that in something that
most people would dismiss as being too, you know, off
the radar then, yeah.

The phrase "herd mentality" (and "sheep" in other conversations) was used to describe the behaviours of those considered to be part of the 'mainstream', to indicate mass conformity, and a lack of individuality. The description of music's value in the conversation: "you can find value in something that most people wouldn't be able to find value in" and "you can find that in something that most people would dismiss as being too, you know, off the radar" highlight the importance of having a different and distinctive taste to others. By being "off the radar", the Extreme Metal fan is able to feel "elite" because s/he has the refined taste of only a select few. The 'mainstream' was also associated with being commercial, for instance, my respondents guarded the boundaries fiercely amongst themselves (what fell within their fandom and what did not) and made distinctions particularly between commercial and underground bands.

Nathan: I remember reading in Terrorizer, some MP wrote in

and stated "leading Black Metal bands like *Cradle of*

Filth[75] and *Dimmu Borgir*"[76] and he's got a point. In a

sense they are leading 'cos most people into alternative

music have heard of them. But they are not leading in

what I would call in the sense of the word.

Liam: They are all just poster bands really aren't they?

These popular and commercial bands having entered the mainstream are no

longer respected or deemed as 'leading' by Nathan. By being deemed "poster

bands", Liam places them as "pin-ups"; they have no substantial substance

apart from their image, which retains the visuals of Black Metal. The research

group's discussions situate their Extreme Metal fandom against a 'mainstream'

and their own activities as 'underground' and, therefore, culturally legitimate.

Extreme Metal music is placed by its fans as separate from other forms of

popular culture and positioned as a 'high' cultural form.

From my respondents' discussions, it is clear that connoisseurship was a shared

system of values that characterised their evaluations and expectations of the

Extreme Metal subculture. It served to distance Extreme Metal from the

mainstream and justify its extremity and profanity as art. This was struggled

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[75] *Cradle of Filth* is a band whose sound moved from Black Metal to a mixture of Gothic and
Extreme Metal sounds and imagery.
[76] *Dimmu Borgir* is a symphonic Black Metal band from Norway formed in 1993 that are often
associated with the band *Cradle of Filth* due to their image and high-quality sound-production.

over at certain points due to the inevitable clash between 'high' and 'low'

culture that Extreme Metal presented and the physical presence of the feeling

fan. This investment in 'high' culture values, the celebration of the music as

'high' art and the adoption of 'high brow' aesthetics also distances Extreme

Metal music and subculture from the mainstream and classed stereotypes

placed onto Heavy Metal. The respondents' values can be characterised in

relation to the connoisseur of 'high' culture in their judgments but these

managed values could also be related to their emphasis on a strong work ethic

that also formed notions of authentic fandom and subcultural membership.

The Extreme Metal Work Ethic

My respondents' Extreme Metal fandom was negotiated through their

connoisseurship and also through their gaining and display of subcultural

capitals. The labours (indeed, identity work) involved were part of Extreme

Metal fan experience and central to their subcultural participation. The research

group possessed a specific form of work ethic that underpinned and drove their

sense of authenticity, membership and distinction. Hence, their labour was a

distinct aspect of their 'extreme habitus'.

Participation in the Extreme Metal music subculture certainly involved hard

work for my respondents. Liam, Ben, Chloe, and a group of their friends,

organised an Extreme Metal club night every month, in the city where they

lived. Their subcultural participation involved a greater level of labour than

that of many other Extreme Metal fans. Organising club nights involved

various elements of stress, struggle, and sacrifice. Liam described one particular club night, which had failed to unfold as they had planned:

> Liam: We lost tons and tons of money on it, which didn't help. At the end of the night, I had to run down to the cash point to get money to pay them [the bands who had performed]. Yeah, cos we hadn't made enough money, Ben, Pete and Trev all put money in as well. Yeah, so all the money that we made on the first two [Extreme Metal club nights] was lost.

> Ben: [Interrupting] but it was good because it taught us a lot of things about running gigs.

> Chloe: A steep learning curve.

Although this particular event presented my respondents with a negative experience of arranging Extreme Metal nights, the group continued their quest to organise them. This sacrifice (in this case financial loss) was also a story that demonstrated the group's dedication to the 'scene' in their city and the importance of Extreme Metal music in their lives. It was not only through the group's involvement in organising gigs that they showed their strong work ethic. Attending clubs and gigs also involved significant effort and labour. Not only was there a need for finances, and leisure time; but also such events often

included travelling long distances around the country and to festivals in Europe. In his description of a gig he had recently attended, Ben placed importance upon the work involved in organising the gig and getting there, which in turn placed further merit on fans 'making the effort':

> Ben: There was kind of a community feeling, everyone was like, you know, "this gig's been hard to put on", or whatever, "people have trekked out all the way out here to see this band".

In Ben's account, here, there is a sense of community being solidified through shared work or effort. The gig was difficult to arrange, and to get to, which made it more likely (in his eyes) that only committed fans would attend. Subcultural work and the emphasis upon 'making the effort' was therefore a key way in which the respondents expressed (and proved) their commitment to the subculture and reinforced their Extreme Metal identities. Moreover, these processes gave my respondents a "community feeling" of being members of the subculture.

I have already described the importance of possessing specific subcultural capitals in order to understand and appreciate the Extreme Metal music genre sounds. It is, therefore, not only subcultural activities, but also Extreme Metal music itself that demands a degree of labour. In his study of Death Metal musicians, Berger (1999: 173) describes the importance musicians and fans

placed on engaging with music: "over and over again, the Metalheads explained that music listeners must not merely let sound wash over them, but they should listen to music *actively*, engaging with the music and making it meaningful". For my respondents, musical taste, and enjoyment similarly resulted from such effort:

> Liam: It was something that Nathan said that I really agreed
> with, about making the effort. Having to put the effort in
> to listen to music. Like, I don't know, I'd never made
> the effort to listen to music before I listened to Metal.
> It's not just like making the effort – it's hard but
> rewarding. Like, the more effort you put into it, the more
> you listen to it and think about it.

This labour ("having to put the effort in") of listening to music suggests that taste is something more than an immediate reaction, and something that is actually worked at. Liam's account raises the issue of why he put effort into it in the first place, that Metal emerged as something worth putting the effort into because it gave something back ("it's hard but rewarding") although quite what the reward comprised was unconfirmed. In other accounts, effort was linked to respect for musicianship and scene support:

> Jack: I suppose if you think someone has put the effort into
> creating that record you should put the effort into
> listening to it.

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Here, Jack articulates his desire to allow bands to impress him, as opposed to rejecting them at face value. The fan may assume the work ethic of the musicians themselves. Part of the pleasure of listening to Extreme Metal, therefore, appeared to be related to the labours of fandom or 'subcultural labour'.

The research group members displayed a strong concern over the de-valuing of their subcultural labour. A subsequent group discussion about the rise of the Internet centred on its potential to remove the work associated with fandom and subcultural activity. The Internet provides instant access to music knowledge, information on live events, fan opinions and downloadable music. It also increases promotional opportunities for Extreme Metal bands. Despite the many associated advantages of Internet technology, my respondents largely derided the potential of the Internet with regard to the Extreme Metal subculture:

> Liam: It doesn't really seem fair in a way that anybody with, I
> don't know, half an hour can know everything there is to
> know about these bands, can build their own website,
> can get in touch with these people. It almost cheapens it
> in a way.

The threat here relates to the fear that fan identity might be achievable despite a distinct lack of effort, investment and work. What "it" cheapens is

unconfirmed, but what Liam seems to be alluding to here is subcultural identity or membership. This indicates that Liam felt that such threats meant that his work (and that of the other respondents) had been wasted. If this was the case, this also implied that the capital from their work would be made obsolete. The respondents' work ethic, as a consequence, constructed a form of authenticity that continues to make their investments (or work) worthwhile.

I have highlighted that many of the shared values within research group meetings were characterised by a certain work ethic. Respondents placed emphasis upon the investments they made, and the labours which they put into their fandom of Extreme Metal music and their subcultural participation. The shared values related to subcultural labours highlight that the effort involved in acquiring subcultural capital is nearly as important as the capital itself. The shared valuing of work thus conveys authentic and committed fandom. So far, in this chapter, I have considered the research group's shared capitals and values; I now consider my respondents' collective distinctions of taste that further reveal the 'extreme habitus' they share.

Shared Distinctions

Many subcultural studies have drawn on members' insider/outsider distinctions and the figures within those cultures that are deemed inauthentic. In Ande's (1998) study of punk culture, those who lacked authentic commitment were regarded as 'poseurs'. Fox (1987) similarly identified a series of distinctions made between hardcore, softcore and 'pretenders' within the Punk scene.

These studies are reminiscent of Becker's (1963) account of Jazz musicians'

demarcations of insider/outsider through the terms 'hip' and 'square'. The

demarcations made between 'insider' and 'outsider' are also explored by

Thornton (1995) and Hodkinson (2002) in relation to Bourdieu's (1984)

'distinctions of taste'. Authenticity is not objective; Bourdieu (1984: 56) argues

that tastes represent what they are through what they position themselves

against, that "tastes (i.e. manifested presences) are the practical affirmation of

an inevitable difference. It is no accident that when they have to be justified,

they are asserted purely negatively by the refusal of other tastes". It was not

only in the refusal of others' tastes and distaste that my respondents displayed

their collective identity, in addition they placed their fears of the loss of

community in the figure of an 'other' to reinforce their identities as 'authentic'.

Insiders/Outsiders

In discussing the work ethic of my respondents, I have highlighted that the

Internet was placed as a threat because it reduced their subcultural labours. In

addition, there appeared an emphasis upon the possibility for 'anyone' being

able to gain subcultural capitals without labour. This suggests that my

respondents felt that only a particular type of person should be a member of

Extreme Metal subculture. The respondents (as connoisseurs) made

distinctions of taste against the mainstream. 'The mainstream', Thornton

(1995: 101) argues, is a term commonly used by subcultures and subcultural

studies but remains an unconfirmed mass. She goes on to assert that depictions

of the mainstream "exhibit the burlesque exaggerations of an imagined *other*".

The distinction of taste the respondents made against the mainstream often

centred on the infiltration of 'outsiders' (others) into the arena of Extreme

Metal, which would result in a weakening of the subcultural community. For

example, the negative effects of 'outsiders' participating at Extreme Metal live

events were described:

Ben: I think this sounds elitist as well, but as Metal has

become more popular, it has attracted more of those who

don't understand the community aspect of it.

Liam: Yeah, I'd agree with that.

Ben: And the kind of influx of Hardcore[77] people that wanna

swing their arms and kick as well as

Chloe: [Interrupting] There's a time and a place for Hardcore

dance[78] and that's at Hardcore gigs.

Liam: Yeah, with their kung-fu moves and stuff.

Chloe: But not in Metal.

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[77] Hardcore is a subgenre of Punk Rock that is heavier and faster than its predecessor. It has spawned several fusion genres such as Metalcore, which is often referred to as 'Hardcore' by Metal fans (which is most likely what my respondents are referring to here).

[78] Hardcore dance is typically associated with body movement to rhythms and beats; it involves moves such as the '2 step' involving the movement of legs in time with the drum and the 'windmill' which involves the swinging of the arms.

Liam: It's a community thing isn't it 'cos you've got like an

unspoken rule that you've gotta look after people and

stuff?

Chloe: But as you get more and more dicks in the Mosh Pit, you

get less inclined to look after them as well.

Ben: Yeah.

Liam: Yeah. And you only need one person to be an idiot as

well to really mess things up. Like, I punched a guy once

in the mosh pit.

Ben: Well yeah, if someone's really being an idiot and keeps

knocking into me, I'm gonna give 'em a shove back and

they're gonna knock into someone else.

A key threat to the Extreme Metal subculture as perceived by Ben is its

increase in popularity. This can be seen as a movement toward the mainstream,

which is so derogated by the group. By not participating in the desired way, in

this case, through doing Hardcore dance moves and 'misbehaving' in the mosh

pit, the outsiders were seen to weaken the Extreme Metal subculture with its

shared values and behaviours. Both Liam and Ben talk of their policing of this

behaviour through physical violence. Through this policing of others'
behaviours and their expressions of fear of outsiders invading subcultural
activities, the respondents indicate their shared values and commitment to the
Extreme Metal subculture. The 'outsider' is therefore collectively identified in
order to reinforce one's 'insider' status.

The 'Scenester' as 'Other'

The 'outsider' is in many respects an imaginary 'other' who serves to confirm
what the collective members are not. The research group members described
those who appeared in the Extreme Metal subculture who lacked 'authentic'
commitment as 'scenesters'. The 'scenester' appeared as an opposite identity to
that of the research group members:

> Liam: I absolutely despise anyone like that who's a 'scenester'
> in Metal, they are really damaging to it and how we're
> perceived and how bands are perceived and to how the
> industry works.

> NA: So those people who flip between...?

> Liam: Yeah, like between bands and ideas.

> Chloe: Yeah, like these people will like Hardcore one week and
>
> then Emo[79] the next week and then in a few weeks time
>
> they'll be putting on the eyeliner and getting ready to go
>
> Goth[80] or whatever.

Emphasis here is placed upon the 'scenester' regularly changing identity through adopting varied styles and moving between music cultures, and hence viewed as uncommitted and unstable. The 'scenester', in many respects, can be related to Bauman's (1996) 'postmodern tourist', who is characterised by a desire to avoid having a bound or fixed identity. Bauman (1996: 24) argues that the problem people experience in a postmodern society "is no longer how to discover, invent, construct, assemble (even buy) an identity, but how to prevent it from sticking". He uses the figure of the pilgrim to represent modernity's ongoing journey to identity formation, and introduces the figures of the stroller, vagabond, tourist and player to represent the postmodern fragmented and unfixed attitude towards identity. The fluidity of the scenester's identity is situated in direct opposition to the research group's emphasis upon the shared values, investment and commitment manifested by 'authentic' Extreme Metal identity. The figure of the 'scenester' therefore was utilised to express the stability of my respondents' fan identities.

The research group members claimed that the 'scenester' failed to display the 'rules' and capitals of Extreme Metal subculture, for example, Liam described

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[79] Emo is a music genre and culture that emerged from Hardcore; it is strongly associated with a youth fashion.
[80] Goth is a music subculture that arose in the 1980s, influenced by gothic literature and horror.

the scenesters' failure to understand the common codes linked to the music subculture they had visited:

> Liam: It's like a big funny adventure for them [scenesters], it's all like you now, I'm gonna go to a Metal show see some freaks and like I might mosh cos it's funny. They've obviously got nothing better to do. Maybe heard of the band. They're having a laugh and like they think moshing's fun and, like, they don't know moshing etiquette almost.

The use of the term "moshing etiquette" is used here to represent the shared values, behaviours, manners, and following of 'rules' expected at a live performance. The failure to learn and to follow these expected rules therefore identifies an individual as an outsider. The 'scenester' remains an outsider and invader, not even on the periphery of the community because s/he chooses not to attempt to learn the common codes and capitals and fails to take subcultural participation seriously.

In his analysis of British politics and the conservative right, Barker (1981) illustrates racism in discourse. He draws attention to the tribal identifications that emerge when there is a fear of one's way of life being threatened. Just the presence of 'aliens' constitutes a threat to a way of life: "alieness of the outsiders cracks the homogeneity of the insider" (Barker, 1981: 20). Similar to Barker's (1981) use of the notion of tribal identifications, my respondents

feared that their culture and their way of life would be weakened by the invasion of outsiders ('others') from different cultures into their own. Liam reflected in one of the later group meetings how the 'scenester' represented a real fear for the research group:

> Liam: I think we all have, whether it's like conscious or not, we all have a fear about scene being corrupted by people too false for it. Over all these discussions we have always talked about poseurs and people who aren't or don't have the same passion as us and you see that we all get a proper bee in our bonnet about basically people who aren't into Metal who say they are. I think everyone has a fear that his or her scene is going to be weakened by that.

> Ben: Overrun by scenesters.

> Liam: Basically, yeah because of the scenesters.

The ideal of collective identity with its shared passions, investments and subcultural labours was therefore seen to be at risk from the activities of un-authentic fans. The scenester could potentially infiltrate subcultural activities without any real commitment to subcultural identity. The subculture may be "corrupted", "weakened" and "overrun" suggesting that, for Liam, the Extreme Metal subculture is potentially pure, strong and elite, if free from the scenester.

The 'uncorrupted' subculture is an idealised arena that represents something of Liam as afan who, as connoisseur, values music as art (pure and 'elite' taste) and has adopted a work ethic, placing labour as subcultural activity (strong commitments and collective identification). Through situating themselves against the scenester, my respondents appeared to be defining an 'authentic' Extreme Metal identity for themselves.

From their discussions about 'outsiders' and 'scenesters', it is apparent that group members desired to define their membership as stable, committed and authentic; and protect the ideal of collective Extreme Metal identity. The 'authentic' fan and his/her shared values and behaviours were presented through defining what s/he was not. The 'scenester' was the focus of respondent fears and threatened their identities because s/he did not display any real commitment to subculture. 'Extreme habitus' was, therefore, expressed through my respondents' distinctions of taste.

Conclusion

Extreme Metal live events are open to all those who may wish to attend. Likewise, anyone can buy Extreme Metal music, choose to read about it and acquire knowledge from the media or Internet. However, what I have proposed in this chapter is that fans take part in creating boundaries and hierarchies and have collective practices, ideals and behaviours. The research group's collective habitus and subcultural labours served to reinforce their sense of

authentic collective identity and kinship as members of Extreme Metal subculture.

Through drawing on the Bourdieuian concepts of habitus, capitals and distinction and Thornton's (1995) concept of subcultural capital, I have argued that my respondents have a shared habitus related to their participation in Extreme Metal subculture. I have considered the distinct subcultural capitals my respondents possessed, in particular Extreme Metal knowledge, style and activities. These shared capitals highlight the ways in which fans interact with one another in creating a subcultural hierarchy. My respondents also displayed common values that can be characterised in relation to connoisseurship and investment in labour. Although Extreme Metal music can be considered as 'low'/popular culture; through adopting connoisseurship in their interactions, and displaying 'high' culture values, my respondents were aligning Extreme Metal with art. Through adopting a work ethic, my respondents placed labour as a key activity of Extreme Metal subculture that conveyed authenticity and commitment. The labours involved in acquiring subcultural capitals are, therefore, part of the capitals' value. My respondents also made shared distinctions of taste that served to reinforce their collective/subcultural identity. Through situating themselves against 'outsiders' (in particular 'scenesters'), my respondents were using the 'other' as a form of subcultural identification. I have demonstrated the hierarchical relations and collective habitus at play that serve to structure community identity and reinforce a sense of membership that

place my respondents' experiences of Extreme Metal subculture as a taste culture.

The work ethic and the distinction made against the 'scenester' along with the work involved in the acquiring, displaying and protecting of subcultural capital suggests that a great deal of labour is involved in the taking up and retaining of an Extreme Metal identity. It is to the nature of this labour, in relation to the learning and defending of Extreme Metal identity, that the next chapter turns in order to uncover how Extreme Metal habitus was acquired.

Chapter 6

"No One Likes Some Cocky Newcomer"

Labour and Learning: Working At Collective Identity

The previous chapter illustrated that my respondents were in possession of certain subcultural capitals, held a strong sense of authentic taste and made distinctions of taste that constituted 'extreme habitus'. It additionally highlighted their strong work ethic and the labour involved in the adoption and retention of those capitals and related notions of Extreme Metal identity. I have so far considered the ways in which my respondents, as Extreme Metal fans, defined and communicated their subcultural identity. In this chapter, I discuss how my respondents acquired the Extreme Metal habitus to transmit 'authentic' Extreme Metal identity via a consideration of the processes of becoming, learning and defending an identity through labouring. I argue that labour-learning processes naturalise fans into community, and that they involve interactions and practices through which fans become part of (and identify with) the Extreme Metal music subculture.

As I outlined in Chapter 3, literature around the concept of subculture has been critiqued for its failure to explain the differing degrees of commitment of subcultural members (Clarke, 1981; Muggleton, 2000). In contrast 'learning culture' can be used to explain the differing degrees of commitment, and fan positioning in the subculture's hierarchy and further explain the acquirement of habitus. Drawing on Lave and Wenger's (1991) theoretical framework

concerning 'legitimate peripheral participation', I argue that my respondents took part in certain forms of labour, and a system of learning that served to define their positioning within the Extreme Metal subculture. These labours of learning and the subsequent defence of them produced hierarchy and community identity.

To this end, this chapter considers the process of labouring and learning in becoming a full participant in the Extreme Metal subculture; the behavioural changes involved in one's movement from 'newcomer' to 'oldtimer' and the continued labours of learning involved in being a subcultural member. I begin by looking at the inside labours of my respondents, in particular, the processes of learning and becoming involved in Extreme Metal fandom and subculture. This part of my analysis takes into account respondent descriptions of developing music taste, their reliance and then rejection of the media as a pedagogic resource, accounts of their past behaviour, and the distinctions made between 'newcomer' and 'oldtimer'. I then discuss the outside labours involved in being a subcultural participant, in other words, the balancing, management and defence of Extreme Metal identity to retain its related habitus. I consider the outside pressures to reject Extreme Metal subculture; the attempts to defend, protect and conceal Extreme Metal identity to 'outsiders'; and the challenges to work life balance and subcultural participation. The chapter, therefore, argues that my respondents took part in a process of 'labouring to learn' and 'labouring to defend' a collective identity, which reinforced commitment to that identity and a sense of subcultural membership.

Prior to considering the research data, I begin with a brief discussion of collective labouring and learning to highlight its potential use in considering music subculture participation and identity.

Labouring and Learning

Labouring and learning can be considered as key elements in explaining how people become members of Extreme Metal subcultures and defend that position. Labouring, Kahn-Harris (2004b; 2007) argues, is a mundane scene activity of Extreme Metal fans that can be linked to their everyday pursuit, display and performance of subcultural capital. The labours of music identities can be seen in the performance of capital and distinctions made, but can also be related to the process involved in becoming an identity and retaining that identity.

As well as being an end in itself, learning can be interpreted as part of what MacRae (2004) calls a 'process of becoming'. Becoming a 'clubber', she argues, involves entering a fan community or music subculture and becoming involved in its activities, and that it entails the transmission of knowledge and the learning of culture in the day-to-day experience of that social world. In Miles' (2000), consideration of youth lifestyles, he suggests developing a theory of learning as cultural practice. Similarly Cohen and Ainley (2000) have highlighted the need for an approach that considers 'cultural learning' to advance youth research. Learning, they argue would highlight how knowledge is obtained and transmitted and the forms of identity work entailed. Learning,

therefore, offers the potential to understand the process of becoming an identity linked to music subculture, which involves the transmission of knowledge, identity work and interaction.

Labouring can also be regarded as key in the learning of subcultural behaviour, structure, distinctions, the defence of fan and subcultural identities, and thus community. Labour and learning is central to Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation', which places learning as a process of participation mediated by the differences in perspectives of co-participants in a 'community of practice'. For Lave and Wenger (1991: 29), learning is an evolving form of membership and identity:

> Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and oldtimers, and about activities, identities, artefacts and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice. A person's intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice.

Lave and Wenger (1991) apply their theory to workplace learning, but the 'legitimate peripheral participation' of community members can be applied to any social practice that entails learning as an integral constituent. It is my

contention that this conception of 'learning' can be applied to Extreme Metal fandom and subculture, particularly the learning and performative labours linked to respondents' adoption of community values, such as their valuing of work, commitment, and investment. In a reversal of Willis' (1977) seminal adage, 'labouring to learn' thus describes the process of labouring and learning involved in becoming a member of a music subculture and in the continuation of that identity. 'Labouring to learn' can therefore be considered as a form of identity work, or performative labour that serves to create a stable identity for one's self.

Labouring to Learn

The research group members' discussions revealed the constructed nature of taste and identity in the sense that identity as an Extreme Metal fan was 'worked at'. I now discuss how my respondents took part in identity work and a process of labouring to learn in which they were able to move from the outside and peripherals as newcomers to full participants of a music subculture.

Learning to Listen

Within research group meetings, various stories and descriptions of becoming a music fan emerged. In some cases, the discovery of a music taste was presented as sudden and immediate. In our first research group session, Ben's description of when he first heard rock music (a Guns 'n' Roses[81] album), placed his immediate reaction as life changing: "listening to that tape totally

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[81] Guns n Roses is an American Hard Rock band.

changed the way I felt, even at such a young age", here fandom appeared to be a result of pure or 'natural' taste. In spite of this, many group discussions about the discovery of Extreme Metal, suggested the constructed nature of taste, with taste being dependant upon respondents 'developing an ear' for the music genre or band:

> Ben: I think it is what you hear. The more Black Metal you listen to, the more badly produced music you listen to, the more your ears become attuned.

> NA: True. It's like you can hear beyond the initial fuzz.

> Ben: Same with Death Metal. The more you listen to it, it doesn't seem so extreme to you, but your mum would think 'oh my God. What's that noise?'

The listener must learn to listen: to listen "beyond the initial fuzz" and "attune" one's ears or acclimatise oneself to the music, which, in effect, reduces the 'extremity' of the first listening experience. In this discussion, Ben measures extremity by "your mum(s)" reaction, a figure that has connotations with an opposite character to Extreme Metal music: soft, caring and feminine. Group participants gave accounts of having to listen to some music repeatedly and having an immediate aversion to the music, they now claimed to love. Music deemed too 'heavy' or 'extreme' was approached in a process of easing in

through a gradual familiarization with the music and the genre that surrounded it. The group explained this process with regard to their own experiences of encountering music, which they deemed 'extreme':

Liam: I think you do develop an ear for it. I remember buying a CD which had like, some really early *Sepultura*[82] and *Pantera*[83] on it and just listening to it and thinking 'oh my God'. Then coming back to it and liking it, a bit later with some repeated listens and actually getting it.

Ben: I was like that with Black Metal. I couldn't get into it straight away. I bought a *Darkthrone*[84] CD; I turned it on and turned it off.

Liam: It was just a horrible mess?

Ben: Yeah. It took something else to get me into the genre and I came back and understood it.

Jack: I was like that with [the album] *Under a Funeral Moon*[85]. I fucking hated it for about six months.

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[82] *Sepultura* is a Brazilian Metal band whose early albums were of a Death Metal and Thrash Metal style.
[83] *Pantera* is a Metal band from Texas.
[84] *Darkthrone* is a Norwegian Black Metal band.
[85] *Under a Funeral Moon* is the (1993) album by Norwegian Black Metal band *Darkthrone*.

NA: So what was it that changed?

Jack: I think it was because it's so harsh you had to sort of bring yourself in.

Ben: I listened to *Mayhem*[86], which I think was more accessible and musical and got some feelings listening to that and went back to *Darkthrone* and kinda saw what they were doing in context, I suppose. It's kinda like stealing something else maybe. *Mayhem* were more light, but still harsh, and I could listen to that.

Jack: It's like you've never worn shoes before and *Darkthrone* are hobnail boots and like *Mayhem* are comfy trainers. If you wear the comfy trainers for a bit, you are like, 'yeah, I could get used to this!' And then the boots aren't so bad.

Ben: Yeah, that is a good analogy.

Here, my respondents talk about a listening process, which takes them from aversion to "getting it" via repeated exposure and their subsequent and incremental entry into the genre. Jack's description of wearing in and gradual introduction from soft to hard explains the process of 'learning to listen'. Jack

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[86] *Mayhem* is a Norwegian Black Metal band.

gained familiarity with a music genre, so that he could develop a way to understand or appreciate the music he felt alienated from. Why the group members chose to learn to listen, to ease them in and go back to music they immediately wanted to turn off and claimed to hate, remained unexplained. In many ways, it seemed that there was a desire to understand, to identify with and to find value in something that gave them an extreme response. On the other hand, it suggests that taste is cultivated and pursued in a purposeful way, with respondents labouring to acquire and develop music taste. Such labours could be considered to lead to feelings of achievement and attachment to the music and to both collective and individual identity formation.

Pedagogic Resources

Learning, might also be deemed to be a key process of 'becoming' a member of a music subculture. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), learning begins from the point of 'legitimate peripheral participation', and leads to engagement and full participation. Research group discussion regarding Extreme Metal music media highlighted that the music media played a central role as a pedagogic resource in educating subcultural members; facilitating their movement from 'outsider looking in' to full 'insider' or 'member'. In the UK there are two magazines associated with Extreme Metal: *Terrorizer* and *Zero Tolerance*, although other Metal magazines do sometimes feature Extreme Metal bands such as *Metal Hammer* and *Kerrang!* There are also fanzines (available via mail order) along with Internet e-zines and websites, all of which are key sources of information for the fan. In early stages of their music

fandom, respondents recalled the popular music press playing an important role in introducing them to Extreme Metal and being relied upon for information and their acquirement of knowledge. Ben described this importance when he remembered his use of the popular, weekly Rock and Metal magazine *Kerrang!*:

> Ben: When I was first getting into Extreme Metal, I remember buying an issue of *Kerrang!* That had a feature on 100 albums you must hear before you die. Most of it was uninteresting, but they had sections on top Black, Death and Thrash albums you 'must' hear. At the time, I was into *Pantera*, *Machine Head*, *Slayer* and *Sepultura* and although I suspect these were largely inaccurate factually, I found them really useful guides. I was really attracted to the band pictures of the Black Metal bands, which were really unique and the album covers of the Death Metal section, which I found really morbid, obscure and intriguing. I used those sections as a guide to what albums to buy, as we didn't have the Internet back then and there wasn't a vast amount of Extreme Metal media at all in the country town I lived in. Although *Kerrang!* can be criticised in many aspects, these guides focused on the key albums by *Burzum*, *Darkthrone*, *Morbid Angel*, *Death* and *Obituary*.

Although they probably weren't saying anything new,

they were invaluable for getting into Extreme Metal.

Ben's story indicates the importance of media in early fandom and involvement in subculture, where the media often serves as a pedagogical artefact that introduces music genre, advises fans and offers a window into that world. That Ben viewed the images he saw as "intriguing" and "unique", illustrates a desire to understand and be part of the unknown. The magazine 'guides', Ben claims, "were invaluable for getting into Extreme Metal". This attitude contrasted sharply with the respondents' current opinions about the media. At a later stage of involvement, the group had rejected the popular Metal magazines for Extreme Metal magazines such as *Terrorizer*, which in time were also rejected by the group as Liam explained:

Liam: *Kerrang!* is like the gutter, they are like 'Wham bam'.

It's what you expect, but in many ways *Terrorizer* is

worse in that reason (sic), because it does claim to be a

serious magazine and you think serious Metal music,

I'm not interested in sensationalist crap I'm going to

read this. But it's really the same, just presented in a

slightly different way. It took a while before I really

clicked on to it. They are still pushing bands down your

throat. They're still victimising certain areas of music.

And when you read articles in there and you know the

background to it, they are wildly inaccurate as well. I

bought one recently which had an article in it about

paganism and Metal and it was bollocks wasn't it?

Liam's description of *Terrorizer*'s failure to be "serious" and his criticism of

"wildly inaccurate" content, illustrate the importance that he places upon

intelligence and knowledge, all of which were comparable to the connoisseur

values discussed in Chapter 5. Liam associates the Extreme Metal media with

the mainstream, he perceives that the magazine follows trends and promotes

bands ("they are still pushing bands down your throat"). All of my

respondents criticised the Extreme Metal music press (i.e. *Terrorizer* and *Zero*

Tolerance) in this way, positioning their own values and tastes against them.

The group also recognised their opinion about the music press had changed

overtime:

Liam: I think it is good that they [the Extreme Metal press]

exist but you grow beyond it.

Ben: We are all at a level now, you know, we all like stuff

that is a level more underground than *Terrorizer* covers.

Respondents abandoned the media as an educational resource, when their

subcultural knowledge had been developed. For most of my respondents, the

music press played an important role at the beginning of their involvement in

the Extreme Metal music fan community (when they were positioned at the legitimate peripheral stage). However, as their subcultural activity increased, they learnt different attitudes towards the media, placing more of an emphasis upon the subcultural values of the connoisseur based around knowledge, distance and reason.

Past Behaviours

Within several research group discussions, my respondents recalled their past behaviours which highlighted their difference from the early stages of becoming involved in Extreme Metal subculture. Such accounts of the way they used to behave indicate the taking up of different positions and attitudes over time that is involved in being a member of a music subculture. Chloe described her past behaviours to the group, illustrating how her activities had changed:

> Chloe: When I first started going to gigs I'd get a ticket rather than just showing up and paying on the door. And then you'd save your tickets, stick them around your bedroom or something. And I always used to queue up to go in, the way you see kids outside [she names a local live band venue] now queuing up for the gigs – that used to be me and my mates! Quite happily, we'd sit outside for hours just in case we saw bands go past or just because

we'd just got out of school and we'd rushed there and wanted a proper event of it.

Chloe's story of her past was relayed with a kind of wonderment about how she had changed. Her recognition "that used to be me" was told with the view that she was once naïve and performed behaviours that she would not repeat in the present. Chloe describes newcomers as "kids", highlighting that time and age were key ingredients in the system (and hierarchy) of a learning culture. Her account indicates that she had learnt another form of behaviour through her participation in the music subculture. Similarly, Liam described his reaction to observing the behaviour of younger fans outside an Extreme Metal club that reminded him of how he used to behave when he first became an Extreme Metal fan:

> Liam: But there were some kids there, really, really early. Sitting on the steps. And they're like, "are you from one of the bands?" I'm like, "no mate". And when I come back, they were still there and were like, "what time's the door open?" and I'm like, "three hours dude". And one of these two kids wanted to pay on the door. And they were like, "do we get a ticket?" and I'm like, "no they just cross your hand" and he was like, "I really want a ticket" and I was like thinking 'ahh he wants a souvenir'. So I went in and found Pete, who had a block

of tickets, and said "when you get into the gig, come

over to me and I can give you as many as you want". So,

it was quite sweet to see someone being how I was. And

there were guys queuing up like, twenty-five minutes

before we opened the door and a lot of them were

young. I thought 'ahh sweet'.

This account of the recognition of "how I was" indicates Liam's movement

from 'legitimate peripheral participation' to a full community member in

Extreme Metal subculture. It depicts two very different positions within fan

community: (i) the fan as novice queuing up, who has still to learn community

behaviour and (ii) the fan as organiser, who has more experience, knows how

to behave and is active within the community. These accounts highlight the

changing behaviours and positions within Extreme Metal subculture.

Respondents were taking part in a process of learning appropriate behaviours

and in so doing, were moving from a legitimate peripheral role to that position

of full participant.

From Newcomer to Oldtimer

Commitment to an identity is not static, Andes (1998) argues that punk identity

varies and that commitment to identity waxes and wanes over time. The music

fan, therefore, has what might be seen as a 'career' inside a subculture, with

different definitions of 'being' relating to different stages of involvement.

Similarly, Fox (1987) argues that the US punk scene had varying degrees of

commitment to ideology, taste, lifestyle and appearance, which inevitably

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determined ones place in the hierarchy of the local scene. The local scene was separated by a distinction between 'real punks' and 'pretenders'; yet, such pretenders made up the majority taking part in this scene. Length of time spent as a fan and age were two key factors that my respondents placed importance on in their judgments of other fans. Through their consideration of the master/ apprentice relationships, Lave and Wenger (1991) identify how the process of learning involves a relationship between 'newcomers' and 'old-timers'. Similarly, members of the research group spoke about having 'respect' for and 'learning from' older fans that bore similarity with the figure of the 'old-timer'. The group used the word 'family' in an attempt to explain the community that they felt a part of:

> Ben: You can relate it to family, or whatever, because, you know, you've got the older people who have been into Metal for years and they get all the younger people, you know, into records or whatever.

> NA: I always looked up to older people at gigs.

> Jack: My mate's older brother, he had a group of friends that were really Metal and I remember hanging around with his brother and thinking how cool they were.

> Ben: It's [pauses] it's not a father thing, but it's that kind of
>
>   relationship.

Such sentiment highlights the positioning of older members of subcultures as elders who impart knowledge, and who are copied, idealised and respected. The old-timer appears as the father figure to Ben, indicating an authoritative positioning in the subcultural hierarchy and as someone who newcomers 'look up to' and want to become. At the same time, such descriptions indicate a sense of paternalism via which the child (newcomer) is nurtured by the father figure (old-timer). My respondents also talked about how newcomers, might be placed on the periphery of participation and under scrutiny by experienced members:

> Ben: There is certainly a feeling about people, that they
>
>   should pay their dues in some way. Or at least have
>
>   respect if, you know, if you come into it thinking you
>
>   know everything, if you downloaded all the bands off
>
>   the Internet, you are going to make everybody
>
>   prejudiced against you.

> Liam: Definitely, no one likes some cocky newcomer.
>
>   Especially if they have been slogging away for years at
>
>   it.

In contrast to respondents' positive attitudes towards old-timers, the newcomer is treated here with a degree of suspicion and contempt and as someone who must earn respect and "pay their dues" through appropriate activity and evidence of learning. Paying "dues" signifies the importance of labour and the expectation of those who want to participate in the Extreme Metal subculture to work hard in order to be accepted and to learn the collective's behaviours. Such feelings also infer that a newcomer could enter the subculture with great music knowledge, but that is not the only way in which s/he would be judged. As I have previously discussed in Chapter 5, labour was not only the means by which my respondents' subcultural capital was acquired; it was a constituent part of the subcultural capital itself. Fans therefore can earn their positioning through the process of learning and identity work linked to investment, engagement and commitment.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), participants in a community of practice are engaged in an ongoing performance. Positions are unfixed and co-participants can take part even if they fail to display the expected common codes. It may be argued that "the apprentice's ability to understand the master's performance depends not on their possessing the same representation of it, or of the objects it entails, but rather on their engaging in the performance in congruent ways" (Hanks, 1991). My respondents were participating in a similar way within the Extreme Metal subculture. All research group members commented on their past experiences of failing to share the common codes of

Extreme Metal subculture and recognised the ways in which fans can and do perform such codes:

Liam: Yeah, I met a dude at Sixth Form College who was into Metal and he was wearing an *Obituary* T-shirt and he asked me what I thought of *Obituary* and I didn't know who they were. And I said I didn't know them and I obviously disgusted him because he never spoke to me again after that.

NA: Saying that, you'd prefer someone to say, "I don't know" rather than "yeah" and like

Chloe: [Interrupting] "I really like their first album".

Liam: Yeah the trick is to say the first album. The first album's the best one. That works for any band you know, especially if you like some chick, Grindcore person: "What do you think of this? - Their first album's the best". And they're like, "Yeah man".

Chloe: Unless of course this is the first album, then you're caught out then.

Ben: You do meet people sometimes and you're like, "do you like this band" and they're like, "yeah", "what's your favourite song?", "All of them".

Chloe: It'd be better to say "I don't have a favourite".

Liam: Just tell the truth.

This discussion of performing fandom through 'passing' and 'faking' Extreme Metal knowledge indicates the process by which the group members learnt their subcultural identities. As a newcomer, Liam failed to demonstrate the correct codes (in this case knowledge of a particular Extreme Metal band *Obituary*) and, as a result, failed to command the respect of another (seemingly more experienced) Extreme Metal fan. We can also presume from this discussion that through co-participation and engagement with other fans the respondents learnt the importance of identification and how to perform their subcultural identities. The group's repertoire of 'best ways to fake', suggests that they may have participated in attempts to 'pass' at some point in order to engage with, and be respected by, other fans and is, therefore, an additional element of one's labours. Even the 'old-timer' must continue participating, through performing the inside labours of a subcultural member. The labour of learning is an ongoing process. There is always knowledge to be acquired, music to be heard and a need to recognise changes in subcultural values. 'Legitimate peripheral participation' is, therefore, an ongoing process of being:

> Viewing learning as legitimate peripheral participation means
> that learning is not merely a condition for membership, but is
> itself an evolving form of membership. We conceive of
> identities as long-term, living relations between persons and
> their place and participation in communities of practice. Thus
> identity, knowing and social membership entail one another.
>
> (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 53)

Ideas about subculture and subcultural membership may change as individuals move from peripheral to full participation, but at each stage the actor may feel legitimate and of higher status than the status given to them in the judgment of others. The continued labours reinforce one's identity within the subculture and also place value upon a member's investment, commitment and presence in the community. Learning itself can be interpreted as a form of performative identity work because participants take part in a "generative process of producing their own future" (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 58). Labouring to learn is thus a performative labour it "enacts or produces that which it names" (Butler, 1993: 13); working may create a sense of identity through its repetitive nature.

In summary of the present discussion, the process of becoming a fan and the adoption of a collective identity can be linked to the on-going process of labouring and learning. My respondents appeared to be taking part in a form of performative identity work in which they laboured to learn. As fans, their

identity was in a constant process of change as they moved from the role of 'legitimate peripheral' participants to that of full participants in the Extreme Metal subculture. The learning of collective identity was shown to involve labouring which was also indicative of status and commitment. My respondents' labour, however, was not only linked to their activities inside the community; I now consider their descriptions of their 'outside labours' that were linked to the managing and defending of their Extreme Metal identities.

Labouring to Defend

My respondents took part in labours outside of the community, which served to both weaken and strengthen their Extreme Metal identities. They took up performative labours of defence, which involved managing identities outside of the community, attempting to balance the difference and worth of capitals in different social worlds. They were also involved in defending their labours and subcultural capital performed whilst inside the community to 'outsiders'. Such labours can be regarded as attempts to reinforce the stability of, and emphasize their commitment to, Extreme Metal subculture.

Outside Pressures

Like most fans, my respondents had other aspects of their lives unrelated to their Extreme Metal fandom that occasionally encroached upon the construction and maintenance of their Extreme Metal identities. Of note here were family relationships, non-Metal friendships and their workplace environments. Such features of respondents' lives were often discussed in

relation to pressure to 'conform' and shed their subcultural identities,

particularly as they moved into adulthood, with music fandom and subcultural

activity being associated with something youths did:

    Liam: Well I know a lot of people expected me to grow out of

                 Metal when I stopped being a teenager and I know a lot

                 of people who did.

    Chloe: Yeah, a lot of people have gone "Oh I used to listen to

                 such and such but I grew out of it".

    Liam: Ahh I hate that.

    Nathan: Yeah, I hate that terminology. You know, that you

                 don't get told by people to be growing out of classical

                 music, do you?

The perceived expectation by others was to "grow up", out of a music identity

as others did, and had. Music subculture participation was seen as something

adolescents did, not an activity that adults should be involved in. Expectation

to conform and the conformity of other fans moving away from the subculture

all made the respondents feel judged and defensive of their identities. The

discussion also highlights the group's recognition of the stereotypes placed

upon Metal music as a derogated form of popular music, linked to youth

culture shown in Nathan's observation "you don't get told by people to be growing out of classical music". In defence of these assumptions, it seems little wonder that the group emphasized their positions as connoisseurs with serious, intelligent distanced judgment and taste, which had some resemblance to an aficionado of classical music.[87]

Outside Defences

Within research group discussions, my respondents in several instances admitted that they took part in labours involved in the management of identity outside of the subculture. The group spoke about balancing their Extreme Metal identities with other aspects of their lives. They showed willingness to battle against broader social 'norms', by identifying themselves as Extreme Metal fans; but as time went on, they became involved in everyday workplace environments, where they were often compelled to compromise their physical appearances. For Liam, his physical appearance proved difficult to manage because he wanted to retain aspects of his Extreme Metal style in the workplace environment. In Liam's memory work of a time when Extreme Metal style was important to him, he told a story about an occasion where his fan identity and social norms clashed:

> Liam: A few years ago, I worked for a large utility company in
> a management position. I had a good reputation, and was
> well regarded within the company and had several

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[87] For a further discussion of the research group's connoisseurship, see Chapter 5.

promotions. One day my boss spoke to me, and told me

that I could "step up to the next level" [be promoted] but

I needed to change my image – I'd shaved my head, so

grow it out and adopt a normal haircut, shave my beard

off, take my earrings out and so forth. If I didn't do that,

I would progress no further. As evidence, she pointed

out that I'd been on a course, a training course, with two

of the senior management team and after the course they

had both commented to her how surprised they were that

I was so lucid, intelligent and knowledgeable, (so they

expected me to be a knuckle-dragging thug). I felt I had

already made several 'compromises' for the sake of my

career. I had cut my hair off and kept it short for years

and had to buy clothes specifically for dress down days

as my own clothes being Metal clothes were deemed

inappropriate, so I couldn't wear my own clothes for

dress down day. I thought about what meant the most to

me and I decided that it was a step I was not prepared to

take – it was a step too far. Shortly afterwards I left the

company. I've now got no career but I still have my

image.

Liam's story displays the negative associations, which can be placed upon

Metal fans and the ways in which collective style must be managed outside of

the music subculture environment. His final sentence "I've now got no career

but I still have my image" indicates a sense of sacrifice for his collective identity and his commitment and dedication to the subculture. The story additionally shows a clash of capital. As part of two different social worlds (indeed 'fields'), what is valued in Liam's subcultural identity is what is derogated in his workplace environment. The positive rules of style as an Extreme Metal fan caused negative stereotyping and judgments within the environment of Liam's workplace. Group members had differing approaches to managing their identities so that they could continue alternative aspects of their lives, and they displayed differing values in regards to how much they would conceal outside of the Extreme Metal environment. In contrast to Liam's story, Ben described choosing to conceal his Extreme Metal identity in the workplace; because of the questioning, he felt he would receive about his style:

> Ben: When I was at work at [postal company], we were
> allowed to wear Metal T-shirts as long as they weren't
> offensive. But then I didn't wear them because I didn't
> want to go through the whole hassle of people saying
> "why do you like that?" "what's that?" "who's that?"
> and "what does that say? I can't read your T-shirt" and
> "why do you wear black?"

By identifying as an Extreme Metal fan to people in a work environment, Ben assumed that he would encounter "hassle" via a barrage of questions in response to which he must explain and justify his subcultural identity and taste

to others. Many of the group also shrouded their subcultural identities by choosing to say little, if anything about their fan activities to those outside their friendship groups. Subcultural identity was concealed through a performance of everyday identity, which attempted to manage what was known and the extent of their behaviours within the Extreme Metal subculture:

> Ben: I put on a persona it's kinda put on to disguise what I'm like at work or in a situation where I don't want to explain to people what I like.

> NA: I find that when I am in a working environment I am a different person to what I am in a friendship environment. I don't like to give much away about myself and I'm a little more guarded because I think people will make so many assumptions about me anyway.

> Liam: I don't really like to [pauses] when I'm at work I don't like to talk about my, what I've been doing outside of work or anything like that. Like, I don't want to give anything away. So if they say "what did you do at the weekend?" I go "nyah" [a failure to express] I don't actually want to share anything with these people and I

don't want them to know anything about me outside

work.

From this discussion, it is clear that the research group assume that those outside of the subculture will not understand them, and therefore they feel the need to defend their identities through concealment. The "disguise" of their 'real' identities was due to the assumption that they would receive negative judgments by outsiders ("I think people will make so many assumptions about me anyway"). Such judgments, it seemed, were most likely to be based upon the negative stereotypes placed upon fans of popular music, and Metal (such as adolescence, rebellion and distaste).[88] There was also an unwillingness to share their lives with people who we could not identify with ("I don't actually want to share anything with these people"), highlighting the feeling of difference from those outside the subculture. Using the phrase "these people" places Liam as separate from his work colleagues. Such attempts at managing, compromising and concealing Extreme Metal identity can be considered as labours of defence. Group members wished to retain their fan identities, whilst avoiding having to justify their attachments to others.

The Work-Metal Balance

In his research on the Extreme Metal scene, Kahn-Harris (2004b: 112) claims that Extreme Metal membership is experienced through mundane and everyday activities: "scene members have learned to limit the difficulties of balancing

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[88] These associations are also common within academic literature on Metal discussed in Chapter 2

involvement in the scenic and non-scenic worlds by orientating their practice towards the experience of mundanity". For my research group members, subcultural activity was managed in everyday life. A discussion of the importance of live events revealed the research group's management of their lives in terms of effort and commitment:

Liam: If everyone stopped touring and there was no more gigs it would be disastrous.

[…]

Chloe: I find it difficult to isolate it as part of my life because it is so integral to everything you do. It's planned around gigs really. It's always "what gigs are you going to?" The question you ask your mates "how 'you doing? What gigs 'you going to?"

Ben: I remember when I used to work, you know, I never would have a week holiday unless it was for a festival. It would be one day here to go to see this band, one day…

NA: Yeah, my bloke arranges his days off like that.

> Liam: I've just booked off a week for a festival, and they are
> like "oooh where you are going? Anywhere nice?" And
> I'm like "I'm going to Germany for a Death Metal
> festival, it is just a giant Death Metal gig" and they're
> like "why don't you go somewhere on holiday?"

In this conversation, it is apparent the group made compromises in relation to their work lives and dedicated their leisure time to subcultural activities. These descriptions of arranging 'holiday' time locate the respondents' music fandom as both pleasure and work, that at all time must be managed. It was not only the effort in the balancing of leisure time, but also the subcultural efforts of arranging gigs that the respondents laboured to incorporate into their lives and placed as an everyday labour of being part of the Extreme Metal subculture:

> Liam: The amount of effort and stress that we go through to put
> these things on is enormous. When I talk to people
> outside of the scene, like at work or something, and they
> ask "do you make any money out of it?" and I say "no",
> they just cannot believe it. They're like "why the hell do
> you do it? What are you thinking? What is the point?"
> It's just, it's partly because I wanted to put something
> back into the scene, but also just because I wanted to see
> live music, I want to have it here and people need to see
> these bands.

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Liam highlights the lack of understanding from those outside of the subculture, once again describing having to justify oneself, to defend his identity. Liam's description highlights the negative effects upon the self from subcultural activity ("the amount of effort and stress that we go through to put these things on is enormous"), but he feels his labour is a necessity to fulfil his desires ("I want to have it here and people need to see these bands"). Liam displays his commitment and dedication to the subculture through his work ethic (I wanted to put something back into the scene"), "putting something back" suggests a sense of duty, that what he has taken out through his enjoyment and pleasure must be given back through his labours that can, in effect, produce pleasure for others. The respondents' 'work ethic' has already been given consideration in Chapter 5, as a key value of the Extreme Metal subculture. Other than an expected value of being a subcultural member, the respondents' work ethic and their everyday labours of time management, balancing of labour and leisure, and the labours put into the activities of subculture can be considered to be 'labours of defence'. They serve to enable Extreme Metal fans to continue their subcultural identities whilst participating in the non-subcultural world.

My respondents were labouring to defend their subcultural labours. They had laboured to learn in order to move from the peripheral to full participant in the Extreme Metal subculture. Balancing and managing the pressures of everyday life outside of the subculture with the labours associated with being inside, as a participant in the Extreme Metal subculture, were seemingly responses to limit the loss of the subcultural capital earned through their subcultural labours. My

respondents were, therefore, taking part in identity work in retaining the work done. Such labours of defence can be considered performative labours because they were self-fulfilling. In defending their identities, they reinforced and constructed Extreme Metal identity as stable and committed.

Conclusion

I have suggested in this chapter that for my respondents, becoming a member of the Extreme Metal subculture can be linked to an ongoing process of learning, or a form of 'legitimate peripheral participation', in conjunction with performative labours inside and outside of the subculture. They were therefore participating in a 'learning culture'. This involves learning and labouring to gain, retain, and defend the community's subcultural capital and common codes. Inevitably, identity changes over time through labouring-learning processes and as a reaction against cultural change; fans work at boundaries and distinctions. The respondents, as subcultural participants, therefore, take part in the process of labouring to learn and must suffer the subsequent labours of defence that result from their continued commitment to the collective identity of a music subculture. Labouring was part of subcultural activity for my respondents. Their membership was dependent upon identity work, which reinforced investment and commitment to Extreme Metal. Labouring reinforced collective identity in its performative character, with repetition forming the person's feelings of belonging and having an Extreme Metal identity.

I have so far considered that Extreme Metal fan identity and subcultural membership is displayed and enacted through collective habitus, and the shared performative labours of learning and defending. These practices produce a sense of hierarchy, authenticity and community. Such notions of subculture can also be considered in relation to the interactive practices of its members. The following chapter maintains that through interactive speech, narratives and performative activities we construct our identities and the perception of having collective identity. The Extreme Metal subculture is, therefore, regarded as a 'performative speech community', existing in sociolinguistic interaction.

Chapter 7

"That's What I Want The Music To Be"

Extreme Metal as a 'Performative Community'

In the previous chapter, I discussed the process of becoming a fan, which involved 'labouring to learn' within a fan community. I argued that, as a process, labouring to learn can be related to Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of 'legitimate peripheral participation'. The chapter explored the labours both inside and outside of the Extreme Metal subculture which served as performative identity work and which gained, retained and defended the shared capitals, values and distinctions of extreme habitus outlined in Chapter 5, whilst also constructing stable collective identities for my respondents. The shared sense of collective identity, consequently, can be deconstructed to reveal the interactive and performative nature of my respondents' identities.

This chapter maintains that the notion of Extreme Metal subculture, as invoked by my respondents, may usefully be understood as a 'performative community'. 'Performative community' is an expansion of Bakhtin's (1986) concept of 'speech community', which focuses upon shared linguistic forms of utterance. The chapter draws upon the derived concept of 'narrative community' by Epstein, Johnson and Steinberg (2000), and 'performative speech community' by Epstein and Steinberg (2003), which propose drawing upon shared narratives and performances as well as speech etiquettes to reveal the nature of a cultural world.

The chapter considers 'performative community' in relation to three arenas of etiquette and utterance: speech, narrative and performative practices. Firstly, the idiomatic/linguistic character of Extreme Metal is addressed in relation to my respondents' critical and accepting speech; the speech 'rules' (or etiquettes) in their approach to extremity; and their validation via others' language. This is followed by a consideration of my respondents' shared narrative repertoires and registers, in particular, the use of 'epiphany', 'developmental' and 'difference' narratives. I then consider the performative practices of Extreme Metal fans, displayed in their representation of self, their performance of style and their participation and pleasure in their taxonomisations of music genre. Before turning to such issues, I begin by addressing the concept of 'performative community' in relation to Bakhtin's 'speech community' in order to clarify my approach.

Bakhtin and Performative Community

So far, in this thesis, I have highlighted that for my respondents, at least, fan identity and community existed in interactions with other fans (and non-fans) in relation to their learning, and performing shared values and distastes. These interactive practices of Extreme Metal identity can be related to Bakhtin's (1981) 'dialogic contract': that in our effort to speak, to 'mean' to 'be', we require the presence of an addressee. For Bakhtin (1986: 287), the 'self' is relational: "I am conscious of myself and become myself, only while revealing myself to another". Identity, therefore, exists within interaction and dialogue,

with every utterance defined by the addressee and social context. This dialogic relationship can be considered in relation to community identities that emerge out of interactions with and recognitions from others, which can be identified as 'speech community'. This emerges from Bakhtin's (1986: 60) concept of 'speech genre', which describes a "sphere in which language is used" that has its own types of utterances. A 'speech community,' thereby, has the conventions of a speech genre; it is bound by shared speech etiquettes of utterance that help define the cultural world of a community. The community is reinforced by shared abilities of members to understand and participate in the speech genre.

The Bakhtinian term 'speech community' is expanded by Epstein, Johnson and Steinberg (2000) in their study of parliamentary age of consent debates. They use the term 'narrative community', drawing not only from the speech etiquettes, but also narrative repertoires and etiquettes in their consideration of speech in Parliament. In addition, Epstein and Steinberg (2003) describe the Jerry Springer talk show as a 'performative speech community' due to its conventions of speech and narrative alongside shared and expected performances of emotions. These concepts imply that communities are not places as much as practices of collective identification. Through adopting the term 'performative community', I accordingly take into account the interactive and ritualised practices and performances that constitute a subculture (in this case Extreme Metal subculture) that are seen in common speech, narrative repertoires, and performative practices of my respondents. It is to speech that I

first turn, to consider the idiomatic, linguistic and interactive character of Extreme Metal subculture.

Idiomatic and Interactive Character

So far, in chapters 5 and 6, I have shown how my respondents judged themselves in comparison to other fans and perceived values, that in effect, created what a subculture and fan was for them. Words and terms such as 'scenester', 'scene points', 'mainstream' and 'underground'[89] are loaded with the values of the community as they interpreted them. The research group's shared idioms, critical and accepting speech, and their validation via other fans, illustrate that they experienced Extreme Metal subculture as a 'performative speech community'. One could consider that it is one's ability to understand and participate in the speech etiquettes and utterances that define one's membership.

Shared Speech

In his study, *Asylums*, Goffman (1960) talks about the way in which the adoption of specific linguistic codes is common to closed groups. In addition to possessing a vocabulary related to Extreme Metal music, subgenres and the terminologies related to authentic and inauthentic fandom, such as the 'scenester'; the group also had a particular way of speaking. The linguistic character of Extreme Metal subculture is observable in the critical speech used by my respondents. The research group used exaggerated statements and made

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[89] I have previously discussed these terms in Chapter 5 in relation to the research group's positioning of authentic identities and shared values related to Extreme Metal subcultural membership.

jovial insults to one another (accompanied by foul language), all of which were deemed characteristics of the Extreme Metal subculture by my respondents. When such critical language did enter dialogue outside of the Extreme Metal community, it was greeted with shock and proved difficult for respondents to justify:

> Ben: I think, you know, with my Metal friends, you know I'll say something's "gay"; it's what Metallers do.

> Chloe: Yeah, I use 'gay' all the time to mean rubbish although it's really awkward around my gay friends when I say, "this is totally gay, no I mean queer, er I mean rubbish".

> Liam: Haha. Yeah I've got a gay boss and once I was like "ahh this is so gay" and he's like [pulls a shocked face]. Not good.

Here, Ben justifies his use of the term 'gay' with the statement "it's what Metallers do", highlighting the acceptance of the word in the Extreme Metal subculture to represent a negative reaction or opinion. However, when the word is presented outside of the subculture, they were faced with reactions of shock and felt awkward using it in front of "gay friends" because it inevitably was homophobic in its negative connotation. The group's critical language was not recognised and caused disruption outside of the subculture, but united those

within it, highlighting they were taking part in a 'speech community'. The use of such critical speech with homophobic connotation is not only a characteristic of Extreme Metal subculture. Indeed, many school and youth cultures across the UK display similarities of language with my respondents. What is apparent in research group discussion is that my respondents recognised a commonality to their choice of critical speech, which they identified as part of being Extreme Metal.

Extremity 'Values'

The display of extremity in the Extreme Metal scene, Kahn-Harris (2004: 103) argues, serves to sit uncomfortably with scene members because within the scene "almost anything is publicly sayable and potentially usable in discourse". My respondents also displayed shared values by which they justified and judged 'extremity'. A common claim was that words/lyrics were not taken to mean what they said. Rather my respondents argued the extremity of the words should be interpreted as an attempt to shock and to pursue the desire to create extremity in Extreme Metal genres:

> Liam: I think there is a big difference from hearing a record
>
> where someone's going "I'm going to chop you up" and
>
> then hearing somebody you actually think is going to
>
> chop someone up, and I think that would have to be
>
> [pauses] I've pretty much heard it all lyrically, so it
>
> would have to be something about the music to raise it to

the next level. Or when you read someone's ideas and

you think that he's actually, you know, profoundly

disturbed. But I don't think I've read anything like that,

or heard anything like that.

Liam makes the distinction between saying something, and meaning it. The

propensity to shock is placed above true opinion and outlook. The group

consumption of extremity via the Extreme Metal genres and use of extremity in

their language was additionally related to Extreme Metal humour:

Chloe: I think what's more important than image is the sense of

humour within the Extreme Metal scene. Some genres

are notorious for not having a sense of humour,

admittedly but, on the whole, there is a very sick sense

of humour, gallows humour, running through Extreme

Metal. People can't expect us to listen to music with the

lyrical content that we do and to take it completely

seriously.

Chloe describes Extreme Metal humour as, "gallows humour". Such humour is

centred on death and the darker side of life or 'black humour'. Humour is also

linked to not taking words seriously (and accepting extreme content): "People

can't expect us to listen to music with the lyrical content that we do and to take

it completely seriously!" Through this statement, there is an acknowledgement

of the possible discomfort caused by the lyrical content of Extreme Metal, Chloe points to humour as key to understanding Extreme Metal fans' enjoyment of such content. Black humour and an enjoyment to shock, coupled with the refusal to take lyrical content completely seriously, placed extremity as an expected coupling with the music as a genre. It gave the fan enjoyment whilst distancing outsiders looking in. It highlights that language's meanings and impact vary in different cultural worlds and exist in interactions. Yet humour and shock appear weak justifications of using 'extremity' and highlight the underside of collective identity in which extremity (such as misogynist, racist and homophobic language) is naturalised into accepting speech.

The Notion of 'Scene'

The shared speech of my respondents indicates their collective identifications. Collective identity can be considered in relation to Bakhtin's (1981) 'dialogic relation' because interactions and shared speech serve to create it. Morson and Emerson (1990) describe the dialogic subject as 'self-in-relation': that our identity or sense of self is known through relations with others. Subjects are not in a state of being, but of becoming, through a process of interaction and dialogue between self and other. Bakhtin (1986: 138) claims the 'other' is central to our subjectivity:

> I realise myself initially through others: from them I receive
> words, forms, and tonalities for the formation of my initial idea

of myself […] Just as the body is formed initially in the mother's womb, a person's consciousness awakens wrapped in another's consciousness.

The importance of the other in the formation of subjectivity can be related to how fans talk about their individual and collective identities. In Chapter 5, I highlighted that my respondents defined their subcultural membership in relation to their construction of the imaginary figure of the 'other', who they positioned themselves against through their distinctions. This indicates that Extreme Metal identity is formed through imagining and interacting with others. My respondents described feeling validated through their comparison of, and to, other Extreme Metal fans:

> Liam: People don't want to be seen as some Johnny-come-lately [late-comer]. That's why everyone goes on about being old school[90] as much as possible because they wanna prove that they were there from the start and they've got, you know, some credibility. And that they didn't find out about Metal ten minutes ago or whatever.

> Ben: I like to pretend it [being old-school] doesn't bother me.

> […]

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[90] 'Old school' is used in this context to refer to a long-standing member of a music scene. Extreme Metal fans also use the term to describe the original styles and sounds of Extreme Metal genres.

Liam: Yeah, like, when I say I saw such and such [a band] in

        1994 and people are impressed that's a good feeling. I'm

        like yes; I'm more old school than you are.

Ben: Mmm [in agreement].

Chloe: So you think you are validated through other people

        sometimes?

Liam: I'd been in the scene longer, so yeah.

In this discussion of performing 'old-school', Liam's identity is validated (as

Chloe recognises) and given status through other fans' reactions to him and

how he compares himself to those other fans. This is an interactive and

dialogic way in which a sense of status is formed. Being 'old school' appears

to be an important title both Liam and Ben wish to be identified with and a

system by which they evaluate their own identities. 'Old school' has shifting

meanings, for my respondents. For example, they may not have seen

themselves as 'old school' if the addressee failed to be impressed and had

demonstrated their 'length of service' to be much longer than theirs. This

preoccupation with the other serves as a point of identification and validation

for the fans. Such identification gives fans not only a sense of status, but also a

sense of 'being' an Extreme Metal identity.

The word 'scene' arose regularly in research group discussion but there was little explanation of what it actually meant for my respondents. I therefore decided to use one of the research group interviews to focus upon what they felt collectively part of and what they meant by the term 'scene'. The respondent interpretations of 'scene' were subject to social interaction and negotiation. At the beginning of the discussion, there was a diversity of opinions and a lack of agreement:

Chloe: I think it's [Extreme Metal] made up of lots of little different scenes.

Jack: It's more like groups of friends rather than scenes and I think people tend to try and class it as a scene to make them feel part of something.

Chloe: Yeah?

Jack: Definitely, a good example would be the Black Metal scene, because everyone goes like, "the scene", you know, "do it for the scene" but it doesn't really exist it's just [people] on their PCs going "errr I like Black Metal". That's the scene, you know.

Here, Jack questions the existence of a concept, the word 'scene' is ever-present even in the virtual realm of the Internet yet is difficult to define or explain other than a word that is used by fans. 'Scene' appears as an imaginary or at least fragmented term. The research group members largely classified 'scene' via their own experiences of it, and how they felt they could relate to it and others within it. The words we speak are not neutral, they exist in other people's mouths before we adopt them (Smith and Sparkes, 2008), the notion of 'scene' is already imbued with meaning and coloured by the interactions in which we use it. My respondents acknowledged that their opinions shifted on the term 'scene' and how it applied after a particular interaction:

Jack: Is a scene actually a scene for the people in it? Or is it a scene for people outside of it looking into it? That's the other thing.

Liam: I think you can be in a scene and not know you're in it really.

Ben: Do you think so?

Jack: Wasn't it that guy from... was it from Mutant[91]? Who said "wow this is a great scene", whereas for us it's just a load of people who go to a gig, you know?

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[91] Mutant is a UK underground band that played at one of the Extreme Metal club nights that the group members organised.

Chloe: Yeah.

Jack's question reveals the dialogic nature of music 'scene'. It may be the case that it was only at this point (when a visiting musician announced the group were part of a 'scene') that the group members began to recognise they were in a 'scene'. It highlights that by another person bringing the concept into their language and into the realms of the spoken, the term becomes applicable to what is known and may then be adopted into their knowledge and language. The research group can, therefore, be seen to be participating in a 'performative community'; their notion of 'scene' and the boundaries associated with it are produced through interaction.

My respondents, as Extreme Metal fans, have been shown to share idioms, values and interactions that help to create what is meant by 'scene'. The research groups' use of the term 'scene' revealed the dialogic nature of subculture: that it exists in sociolinguistic interaction. It was not only shared speech, but also shared structures the respondents drew on in order to communicate their identities and fandom. It is, therefore, to the narrative repertoires and registers the respondents used to tell their stories that I now turn to further highlight the group's participation in a performative community.

Narrative Repertoires and Registers

In research group meetings, my respondents took part in telling stories about their lives, their subcultural participation, and their individual and collective experiences. In many respects, these stories had shared repertoires and registers. The common stories to emerge from respondents were related to epiphany, developmental and difference narratives, which indicate their participation in a narrative community. The narrative performances of my respondents and the conventions of narrative further constitute what might be defined as a 'performative community'.

Our life stories involve narrative conventions and devices, such as a need for a linear sequence with a beginning, middle and end; genre conventions; key events; themes; characters; and plots (Redman, 1999; Plummer, 2001). The use of such devices to construct our life stories means "life narratives conform much less to the contours of the life as lived than they do to the conventions and practices of narrative writing" (Plummer, 2001: 186). Our stories are not only told to ourselves, but we also narrate them to various audiences. We fashion our identities, give meanings to our actions and give significance to events via our story telling:

> Our life is essentially a set of stories we tell ourselves about our
> past, present and future. These stories are far from fixed, direct
> accounts of what happens in our lives but products of the
> inveterate fictionalizing of our memory and imagination. That

is, we 'story' our lives. Moreover, we *re*-story them too. In fact, restorying continually goes on within us.

<div align="right">(Kenyon and Randall, 1997: 2)</div>

Story telling is, therefore, an ongoing practice through which we construct our memories and view our lives. In effect, we turn ourselves into "socially organised biographical objects" (Plummer, 1995; 2001). For Bakhtin (1981), stories and words are important because to become a self one must speak. But stories and memories are never our own:

> When people talk of remembering in everyday life – when they make 'memory claims' – they are rarely, if ever, simply describing or reporting an internal process or mental state; they are engaging in the rhetorical, and often contentious activity of social life, and telling of, or expressing, something of their own position in the current scheme of things in relation to the others around them.

<div align="right">(Shotter and Billig, 1998: 18)</div>

When we tell stories about ourselves, they are shared via narrative conventions, and influenced by our desire to make them significant and interesting. In the first of the group meetings, we wrote memory work stories about when we first

felt love for music. My memory work story centred on the event of hearing one of my favourite bands, *Emperor*[92]:

> NA: I was in Sixth Form and I saw my friend Simon who told me I had to listen to this CD. He handed me *Emperor's 'Nightside Eclipse'*[93]. In my lunch break, I went home to listen to it. I put the CD on. It was really low-produced. I felt it was really hard to listen to, and the sound was so unusual, but as my ears became attuned, I thought the music was intense and powerful and it really got my heart racing. The music didn't resemble anything I had really heard before. I felt fascinated by the unknown sounds and structures, and I wanted to listen to it more because it was so different to me but I had to return back to school. In class I spoke to my friend Simon, mentioning the music was weird and had cheesy owl sounds at the beginning of the music. I couldn't explain what I liked about it, I wanted to hear more of this kind of music and I felt that a new world of music had been opened up to me. I continued to listen to that CD again and again.

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[92] *Emperor* is a Norwegian Black Metal band formed in 1991.
[93] *In the Nightside Eclipse* was *Emperor*'s first full-length album released in 1994.

When I reviewed my story, I realised that I had placed my listening to *Emperor* as something of an epiphany moment despite the fact that I had heard other Extreme Metal bands prior to this. When I listened to it, "again and again" it was also due to my uncertainty as to whether I liked what I had heard and exactly what it was that I liked about it. It was actually some time before I ventured into finding more Black Metal to listen to, or even more *Emperor*. So why had I written the story as I had? It seemed as though I had thought of the music I loved in the present and then tried to remember when I had heard it, assuming that the first time was 'love' and also that love was immediate (rather like love at first sight, this could perhaps be considered to be 'love at first listen'). I had also made the moment a personal one, but later remembered that my partner had been present with me that lunchtime. Why hadn't I recalled this until later? My memories had become coloured with later feelings, and I had adopted a narrative structure and repertoire that could be associated with narrating music fandom.

Epiphany Narratives

It was not only my own memory work story that drew on an 'epiphany' narrative. Epiphany moments were present in many of my respondents' stories about themselves. The epiphany is highlighted by Denzin (1989: 70) to be a key narrative approach within biography: "Epiphanies are interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people's lives. In them, personal character is manifested". He argues meanings are given in the reliving of an experience, including those episodes linked to an epiphany. An epiphany

narrative could be seen in my respondents' storying of a sudden leap of divine understanding. The epiphany places 'becoming' a fan within a specific moment, in my respondents' case linked to the hearing of music, which was storied to result in a sudden understanding of music taste or self. On discovering the band *Nirvana*[94] as a teenager, Chloe described the moment using such a narrative repertoire:

> Chloe: For a long time I had just been listening to the radio and
>
> crappy pop songs, but suddenly all that music seemed
>
> unimportant. I felt like I had found a new way of looking
>
> at life. It didn't matter that I didn't fully understand the
>
> lyrics, just listening to the sound of the vocals and the
>
> music was enough.

Chloe's epiphany is situated in relation to music suddenly becoming important in her life following a story line of 'it hit me and then I changed'. Music had become something to be noticed and is situated as a "new way" of being. Her account of becoming excited by music created a link between her former self and her later music identity as Extreme Metal fan. In a similar fashion, Liam structured his story in terms of an epiphany:

> Liam: […] When I was 14, my aunt came to stay with her new
>
> boyfriend Martin. He was a really cool guy, quite funny,

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[94] *Nirvana* was a prominent US 'grunge' band. 'Grunge' is a sub-genre of alternative rock.

really rude and he was a Metal guy. He gave me a tape

that had *Exodus*[95] on one side and *Accept*[96] on the other

side. The first time I heard it I thought this is horrible.

But because he was a cool dude I gave it another chance

and when I actually sat down and properly listened to it,

I'd never really properly listened to music, I guess, I'd

had it on but not really paid it the attention. When I put

it on, I remember thinking that I'd never heard anything

so angry. I was a pretty kinda angry guy at the time

because I was interested in politics and everything

seemed unfair and I didn't get on with a load of guys I

was at school with. I was really cross and upset about a

lot of things and I had never heard anything that touched

on politics and that was aggressive, was fast and kinda

non-conformist. I felt that was something I really wanted

to be part of, but I couldn't find anything like it

anywhere that I lived.

Here Liam places the event of hearing Extreme Metal music in context with the

rest of his life-story, which gives the event more significance and impact. It

also enables Liam to make sense of what happened, and what his reactions

were. He, therefore, weaves various fragments of memory together (such as a

description of his past character) to create coherence to his story and to explain

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[95] *Exodus* is an American Thrash band that has been active since the early 1980s.
[96] *Accept* is a German Heavy Metal band that has some characteristics of Thrash.

why he felt an affinity with the music, which additionally helped to construct a story of how he became an Extreme Metal fan. Liam's story of becoming a fan focuses upon a key event with a key epiphany moment that has a specific outcome of creating passion and identification with music; he places his becoming in a moment that is beyond the normal and everyday. Finally, he sets up the possibility of telling the next stage of how he became part of a collective identity ("I felt that was something I really wanted to be part of, but I couldn't find anything like it anywhere that I lived"). Although this is a key event in his story of becoming an Extreme Metal fan, he indicates it is only a fragment of his story.

Developmental Narratives

The accounts of learning and becoming that arose from my discussions with respondents, which I illustrated in Chapter 6, can be interpreted as developmental narratives that connect events and fragments of life into a meaningful and coherent sequence. These developmental narratives were stories centring on the learning and labouring process involved in becoming an Extreme Metal fan and subcultural participant, which were told personally and collectively often using both the narrative registers of 'I' and 'we'. In a discussion about having an Extreme Metal identity, the group reflected upon the process involved in becoming a subcultural member, which follows this developmental narrative:

> Chloe: It was something I had to work at.

Liam: You had more to prove in those days.

Ben: Mmm, yeah, we worked our way closer to the top.

Liam: Yeah, and you are more insecure about your identity when you're a kid.

The work involved in the process is individual but recognised collectively, seen in Chloe's statement, "I had to work at" and Ben's, "we worked our way". The research group recognised their similarities in relation to the work involved in becoming and being an Extreme Metal fan that created the notion of collective experience. The group discussion also has a grand narrative of cultural change. Liam's discourse brings up the notion of a bygone era ("those days"); situated as a harder time that the entire research group experienced and linked to the behavioural changes related to aging and no longer being a "kid". The collective 'we' story of labouring was also related to shared 'struggles', in particular, related to defending their subcultural capital:

Ben: I think the Internet is great but it's probably the worst thing that could happen to Metal and music in general because it attracts 'scenesters'. You can get instant knowledge; you don't have to be dedicated.

NA: It used to be hard work to find the music.

Ben: Yeah, because it was hard work you only got those

people that were genuinely into it because you had to put

in the hours. But now people can download what I

suppose you'd call a record collection. They don't have

to have friends to introduce them to bands and stuff.

Here, there is a shared narrative of, "hard work" and a narrative of cultural

change, placing us in an era in which technology has changed fandom, and

situated this against a shared (and idealised) bygone era. The respondents'

discussion places the past era as a time of invested and committed fandom, of

hard working fans, and in other words a better quality of fan and of an era from

which the respondents came. The narrative structure, therefore, serves to

reinforce our authentic status as members of Extreme Metal subculture and our

commitment to subcultural identity.

Difference Narratives

The narratives discussed so far have placed fandom as a natural and

developmental process. Another key narrative to be present was of

respondents' difference and alienation from mainstream culture that influenced

their taking up of an Extreme Metal identity. Research group discussions

placed the teenage self as 'different' from 'others':

Liam: I definitely didn't relate well to a lot of kids at school and at college. I wasn't interested in cars; my parents had brought me up with stuff they weren't interested in. So, I was definitely outside [school culture], so to find something that would... I don't know whether it was a conscious decision to distance myself more, but to find something that had fuck all to do with anybody else.

NA: I suppose that was similar with me. For me I hated girly things growing up, I didn't want to have my hair and make-up right and I didn't want to be part of any clique, and in that sense I didn't really relate well to a lot of people. Music removes you from that.

Chloe: I identify with that completely.

Nathan: The way I sort of fell into it, I fell into a group of people that weren't into causing trouble in school. We all happened to be a bunch of reasonably clever people as well, and so I was just hanging out with them and you'd go to someone's place and there were older brothers or something like that and you'd wander in and say "oh what's that [music]?" And they'd call you a tit, tell you to get out and later tell you what it was [group

laughter] I suppose I just fell into a group that were all

into music.

Difference is placed as being "outside" of particular school cultures. In Liam's and my explanation of difference, it is the expectations of gender that we situated ourselves against, with Liam's conflict with a form of masculinity through not being "interested in cars" and my conflict with femininity represented by "girly things". Even Nathan's non-identification with troublemakers removes him from a particular type of masculine behaviour. Our identification with music is positioned to have filled that void of difference. Additionally, music fandom creates purposeful difference, a form of control over that difference, shown in Liam's desire, "to find something that had fuck all to do with anybody else". This particular narrative gives the actor a notion of alienation through a collective identification. The shared experience of difference also unites the group.

Research group members' stories revealed the constructed nature of their identities and the impact of narrative in the group's meaning-making. The narrative repertoires my respondents adopted to relay their memories conflicted with one another. Whilst some stories emphasized the naturalness of taste, (unavoidably struck with an epiphany), others emphasized the process of becoming a fan and the notion of choice in the taking up of taste and fan identity. Through shared narrative repertoires and registers my respondents were taking part in a 'narrative community'. It is not, however, only in the

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language or story-telling of the research group that constituted community. The practices of my respondents also reinforced and constructed for them the character of Extreme Metal subculture. I now turn to the shared performative practices of my respondents that further highlight their participation in a 'performative community'.

Performative Practices

So far, in this chapter, respondent accounts have illustrated that Extreme Metal fan identities are in a process of becoming, unfinished and ever-changing; existing in interactions. Through shared language, ways of speaking, alongside shared stories, a community and collective identity is created. The research group's shared idiomatic character and narrative repertoires demonstrate that the Extreme Metal subculture, for them, is in many ways a narrative-speech community. In this chapter, I finally wish to consider the shared performative practices of my respondents that place them in a performative community. This is observable via considering respondent descriptions of performing identity, style's semaphoric value and genre practices.

Performing Identity

Identity can be interpreted as a form of ritual work (Frith, 1996). It is produced through performative identity work. Like Derrida's (1988) 'iterable utterance', the consideration that all utterances are a form of citation that repeat particular terms, Butler describes the performative as "that discursive practice, which enacts or produces that which it names" (1993: 13). Butler's (1990; 1993)

theory of performativity questions the fact and fixity of reality, self and identity: "It is precisely the repetition of acts, gestures and discourses that produces the effect of an identity at the moment of action" (Lloyd, 2007: 54). Butler (1993) uses the example of naming to demonstrate how reiteration has a naturalising effect: on the birth of a baby and it is proclaimed "it's a girl", one is brought into the domain of language through the interpellation of gender (which has its own attached discourses). If we consider interpellation in relation to my respondents' Extreme Metal identity, one can consider that from the moment one adopts a fan or subcultural identity (which is already a citation) its reiteration naturalises itself into identity and part of the 'self':

> Liam: I think as far as Metal goes maybe I was performing
>   when I first got into Metal, but I don't think that happens
>   anymore. I think if anything that has been so integrated
>   now into my personality because I'm so, because Metal
>   is an intrinsic part of me now. That the performance, if it
>   was a performance, has now become the reality, kinda
>   thing.

Liam draws attention to awareness that when he became a fan of Metal he was 'performing'. This could be related to particular expected behaviours or the 'faking' of identity described in Chapter 6. That Liam feels that "the performance… has now become the reality" and that the performance associated with participation has become "integrated" indicates the process of

naturalising a fan identity. Extreme Metal identity has been created through the repetition of acts or performances. Both individual and collective Extreme Metal identities can be considered as performative; they rely upon citation, ritual and repetition through social interaction. When discussing style and appearance, respondents described performing 'Metal' identity in relation to what was considered a 'Metal pose'. These poses were struck by the respondents in photographs and were present in band imagery. They serve to highlight the importance of citation in fan identity:

Chloe: Liam always pulls the same face for photos, or he does a Metal pose.

NA: So what makes a good Metal pose?

Ben: Looking at the sky.

Liam: Yeah you've got to be dramatic.

Chloe: An orb of power in your hand.

Liam: Yeah you've got to have an orb of power. The orb of power is central to a Metal pose. It is part of the nature of it really. You don't want [pauses] there's something about a Metal pose. You get posters of bands where

you've got guys standing there going [pulls a blank, stiff

face] that's what I associate with bands like

Snowpatrol![97] But when you see a bunch of guys going

rarrr. [Liam does his metal pose snarling aggressively

with his hand held out like an upturned claw] like that,

and you think, 'Metal'.

Ben: Yeah.

The group describe expected visual performances of Extreme Metal identity.

The 'Metal pose' is a cultivated performance of Extreme Metal. It is

exaggerated and dramatic and portrays aggression and power. The 'Metal pose'

is a citation and emulation of Extreme Metal musicians' poses.[98] The

respondents drew on the imagery surrounding Extreme Metal and then recited

and repeated the performance.

Style's Semaphoric Value

The visual performance of Extreme Metal can be related to style. Extreme

Metal style had several purposes: communicating the wearer's 'subcultural

capital' and status alongside one's involvement in the Extreme Metal

subculture to both insiders and outsiders.[99] Style, therefore, has semaphoric

value; style communicated Extreme Metal identity to others whilst also

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[97] *Snowpatrol* is a popular UK Indie/ Alternative-Rock band.
[98] This also suggests that appropriate Metal poses are 'learnt', and part of the learning culture process I described in Chapter 6.
[99] For further discussion of my respondents' stylistic displays of 'subcultural capital', see Chapter 5.

instating a sense of identity for the fan. When Chloe wrote a memory work story about a moment when style or image was important to her, she also described the performative nature of style:

> Chloe: The day I got my first pair of *Doc Martens* boots[100] was very important to me. Finally, I could be properly Metal. No more trainers or shoes – 8 hole black boots were the way forward. Through crippling blisters, a ban on *Doc Martens* at our school, I wore them every day of my smelly grunge-led teenage life. They were never laced up tight, always hanging off my feet as I walked. I wore them with everything, which often made me look a bit weird but I didn't care what other people thought other than it pleased me that they thought I was weird. Other boots came and went but the *DMs* [*Doc Martens* boots] persevered, the soles wore through, the leather cracked, the laces snapped. Long since replaced by other *DMs* they now sit at my parents' house, in the cupboard of my room. A reminder of the past. I still wear *DMs* now, over 14 years on since I bought my first pair, I wouldn't be without them.

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[100] Doc Martens is a footwear brand that is particularly popular amongst Punk, Skinhead, Grunge and Metal subcultures.

Chloe's excitement that "Finally, I could be properly Metal" suggests that by her adoption of style she not only aligned herself with an identity but 'became it'. Similar to other aspects of Extreme Metal identity that have already been described, this story places emphasis upon long-term commitment, and work shown through her descriptions of endurance "through crippling blisters" and the slow deterioration and wear of the boots. Chloe's last phrase "I wouldn't be without them" raises the question of who would she be if she did not have them. Would she fail to be 'Metal'? Or should we take this statement to refer to her commitment to wearing them, and therefore her commitment to Metal identity? Either way, the pair of *Doc Martens* boots took on a symbolic role in defining her attachment to Metal. Through Chloe's enacting of what she felt to be 'Metal' and named 'Metal', she became 'Metal'. This indicates that fans, therefore, may enact the perceived codes and ideals of an imaginary subculture in order to become a community.

Genre Practices

It is not only the nature of forming identity and the adoption of style that can be related to performativity. One might also consider the fan practices associated with taxonomising music genre as performative practice. Music genre can be considered as a system which may produce and construct meaning in relation to genre fandom. One could consider that fans take pleasure in the performative nature of music genre taxonomisation and take pleasure in its 'iterability': of enacting what it names.

Discourses serve to deny and produce objects of knowledge and the way in which practices are carried out (Foucault, 1981). For Foucault (1972) the subject is an effect of discourse and to speak one is dependent upon prior discursive subject positions. Similarly, Hall (1996: 5-6) argues that "identities are…points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us". Music genre, it could be claimed, is a 'discursive taxonomic system', which helps to create, enact and police fan and subcultural identities. The term 'discursive taxonomic system' is used by Schiebinger (2000) to describe a system of classification that is ideologically charged. She argues that the discourses present in zoological and biological taxonomies produce meaning that constructs gender inequality and racialised difference. These 'discursive taxonomic systems' also serve to invite people to take part in taxonomisation and create taxonomies themselves (Scheibinger, 2000). The research group used music genre (particularly in relation to Extreme Metal subgenres) to identify taste amongst other music fans, to reinforce notions of authenticity and to transmit the nature of their own Extreme Metal fandom and subcultural participation.

Genres are constructed as distinct categories with distinct qualities, through the declaration and enforcement of the rules that constitute them (Hodge and Kress, 1988). Genres are, however, indistinct and always changing. Walser (1993: 4) has highlighted that 'Heavy Metal' is not a stable classification; it "is constantly debated and contested primarily among fans but also in dialogue with musicians, commercial marketing strategists, and outside critics and

censors". He argues that like a speech genre, the meaning of music genre depends upon its prior meaning and what the listener brings to it. My respondents regularly displayed attempts to enforce genre taxonomies and protested over the related decisions:

Chloe: So I wouldn't have classed *Slayer*[101] as an Extreme Metal band. But that's just me. I would call them very heavy and I suppose I could have classed them as Death Metal at some point, but I wouldn't have classed them as a

Ben: [Interrupting] There's a lot of Black Metal, which is less extreme than *Slayer*.

Liam: Yeah, very ambient.

Ben: Yeah, a lot of, I don't know, say *Forefather*[102] they're more accessible than *Slayer*.

Jack: That's not Black Metal.

---

[101] *Slayer* is an American Thrash band whose lyrics have covered topics such as Satanism and death. Active since the early 1980s, their early albums had influence on Death Metal music. They are regarded as a popular Metal band because of their large fan-base and coverage of them by the 'mainstream' Metal press.

[102] *Forefather* is a UK band that plays 'Anglo-Saxon Metal' drawing on a theme of Anglo-Saxon times through a blend of Black Metal, Power Metal and Folk.

Ben: Well, I was trying to think of an example mate.

       Forefather is quite folky and melodic isn't it?

Here, the research group are very vocal about their genre opinion, for example, Jack interrupts Ben with the exclamation "That's not Black Metal". Chloe's statement about the band *Slayer* not fitting into the category of Extreme Metal is an example of how fans might police genre and attempt to enforce rules upon other fans, but this proves a difficult task because the group classified Extreme Metal in a variety of ways. Extreme Metal was not only classified in relation to being extreme or for having a definitive sound. Bands such as *Slayer* were excluded from the genre if they were considered too 'mainstream'[103], or not extreme or 'heavy' enough, whilst other bands (as Ben's example *Forefather*) were placed in the category of Extreme Metal even though their music had a sound comparable to folk and their sound was considered as "accessible". There seems a derived pleasure in the defining of genre with several ways to judge, categorise and, thus, disagree. This serves to reinforce the notion that my respondents' object of fandom was music genre, and that music genre fandom has distinct activities (such as taxonomistation practices). Respondent judgments of genre can be linked to the discourses of authenticity and distinctions between underground vs. mainstream within the Extreme Metal subculture, that are also always in a process of change as the positioning of bands change and fans enter the subculture and age.[104] Through the performative practice of genre taxonomisation, respondents enforce a

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[103] I discuss fan distinctions against an imagined mainstream in Chapter 5.
[104] See Chapter 6, for an account of this process, which can be related to 'legitimate peripheral participation'.

notion of community with shared values, practices and discourses of authenticity.

Although at times music's 'extremity' was celebrated and seen as a necessary judgment of the Extreme Metal genre, at other times what was more important to my respondents was the emulation of genre conventions, musicians and sounds. In a discussion about the particularities of extremity and Extreme Metal the group pointed to the reiteration present in music making and the group's genre expectations:

> Ben: Is there value in being extreme for extreme's sake, just
>   to be more extreme than anyone else?

> Liam: I'd like to say no.

> Chloe: They're setting new limits for the genre aren't they?
>   Pushing it a bit further. I think if that is a valid form of
>   artistic expression for them, then sure, and that is valid,
>   in that respect.

> Liam: Extreme Metal is not all about setting the new standard
>   of extremity though. A lot of it is tradition as well. It is a
>   scene that has got loads and loads of roots to its past. So
>   you can be in an Extreme Metal band and think I am

going to make the most extreme record and this is going

to really fuck people up but you also might wanna go, I

wanna make a record that sounds exactly like you know

Dismember[105] in like 1991. Which is still extreme, but

you are taking a different

Chloe: [Interrupting] While actually what a lot of bands are

trying to do is recreate music they like listening to.

Ben: Yeah.

Liam: Yeah, just that sound.

Here, the research group illustrate that as fans and musicians there is distinct

enjoyment in recreating, and copying sub-genres, sounds, and bands. Liam

recognises that Extreme Metal music is often created as a form of citation; it is

re-producing what is known as Extreme Metal. Individuality, extremity and

transgressing boundaries are not the whole picture of fan expectations. There

remains an expectation for the already known. The genre expectations of my

respondents indicate their enjoyment of repetition, of knowing and wanting to

know what to expect and what will come next. The research group admitted

their enjoyment of music that had repeated sounds, structures and therefore

genre expectations:

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[105] *Dismember* is a Swedish Death Metal band. In 1991, they released their debut album *Like an Ever Flowing Stream*.

Liam: That sort of pleasure you get from buying an album by

Six Feet Under[106], you know exactly what you are going

to get. But you know you are going to like it, so it

doesn't really matter.

Rob: That only works for certain bands, I think. Like, if it was

the same for every band. Like, sometimes an album

comes out and you think 'oh no, unless they pull

something new out of the bag here it'll be really boring'.

Liam: Yeah, that's true.

Rob: But some bands you just want them to stay the same.

[…]

Ben: I like it when a song goes exactly how I expect it to.

Like I think this needs a solo and then they play a solo.

To me that's generally good because that's what I want

the music to be.

---

[106] *Six Feet Under* is an American Death Metal band from Florida.

This group discussion indicates the pleasure derived from the performative nature of music genre that repeats sounds, themes and structure. Ben's statement "that's what I want the music to be" highlights his desire to control what he listens to but also the pleasure derived in the performative nature of music and repetition. The importance of repetition is highlighted in the importance of the 'past' and continuity in music and music genre, which also depends upon fan knowledge and sense of shared history. Music produced within Extreme Metal genres (like the attached fan identity) makes references to the past, following the values and expectations of the genre. This emphasis upon shared expectations and continuity in music may also be applicable to the research group's placing importance upon commitment and the stability of their fandom for Extreme Metal music. This fandom is always performative in some way so that Ben's statement "that's what I want the music to be" can also be interpreted as "that's what I want *me* to be"; music genre is a rule-governed space related to the cultural practices that surround its fans that functions to construct stable expectations of Extreme Metal identity.

Social interaction, the repetition of performance and interpellation, all construct how my respondents, as fans, view and perform their identities and feel members of a subculture. Through ritualised performance, citation and re-enactment, identities are naturalised. The shared performative practices of style and genre taxonomisation and expectations highlight my respondents' participation in a 'performative community'. The ritualised performances and practices of fandom construct collective identity around Extreme Metal. Such

fan practices and performances are a citation and re-enactment of signs that create continuity, stability and community for fans.

Conclusion

The research group discussions reveal the nature of the construction of the fan self and subcultural identity. They indicate the dialogic and performative nature of identity, illustrating that individuals participate with others in creating and sustaining a sense of self and of a collective identity. Despite the research group's fandom appearing stable, it cannot be taken as given. Citation and emulation is an ongoing practice, which can also be interpreted as part of the identity work and practices of subculture. The self is unstable, constantly changing and fragmented, but unified through the community of Extreme Metal.

The Extreme Metal subculture, as invoked by my respondents, can be understood as a 'performative community'. It has common speech, narrative repertoires and performative practices that create a cultural world. This chapter has illustrated the shared idioms, critical and accepting speech, language etiquettes and interactions. It has highlighted the shared narrative repertoires and registers within my respondents' stories and the shared performances, and genre practices that place them within a 'performative community'. Through interaction via speech, story-telling and performing, respondents were creating identity and community and enacting on what they had named as 'Extreme Metal' and 'scene'.

I have so far considered my respondents' Extreme Metal identity to be constructed around shared habitus and kinship; fan labours and learning; and fan interactions. It is to the importance of feelings in relation to the research group's formation and construction of fan identities and subcultural identification that the next chapter turns. Positioning my respondents' experiences of the Extreme Metal subculture as a 'feeling community', I consider that attachment and collective bonds related to feeling are formed around music and that, furthermore, it is feeling that provides the drive to acquire habitus, to labour to learn and perform and thus embed oneself in Extreme Metal subculture.

Chapter 8

"I Like Music to Connect with Me":

Extreme Metal as a 'Feeling Community'

In the previous chapter, I considered the participation of my research group members in their 'performative community', with expected speech, narrative repertoires and performative practices. In turn, I highlighted how their interactions reinforced their sense of collective identification and their genre distinctions of Extreme Metal music. So far, my empirical analysis has demonstrated that, for my respondents, music and Extreme Metal subculture are rule-governed spaces with shared performative practices. It has highlighted the ways in which my respondents, as Extreme Metal fans, defined and communicated music taste and identity, and developed kinship; and the processes of learning and labouring that create, naturalise, retain and defend Extreme Metal identity. I now turn to the role that feelings might play in fans' relationship with music genre and the significant function of feelings in communicating the character of Extreme Metal music, the subculture and fan identities that surround it.

This chapter's approach to feeling draws upon Brennan's (2003) use of the concept of 'local structures of feeling' in his research on public mourning. I argue that the Extreme Metal music genre has specific 'feeling structures' related to extremity that can be observed in the language of my respondents, and that these 'feeling structures' communicate something of the subculture

that surrounds it. In addition, I argue that the cultural nuances of my respondents' experiences of Extreme Metal (such as kinship and distinction; learning and labouring; shared speech, narratives and performances) place Extreme Metal subculture as a 'feeling community'.

The chapter is divided into three sections to which a consideration of feeling can be applied: music, extremity (the character of Extreme Metal music) and Extreme Metal community. In considering the relationship between music and feelings I highlight the social character of music, demonstrating that music can be related to the transference of feeling and that music expresses inchoate feeling. In effect, I demonstrate that music genre fandom has distinct characteristics that differentiate it from other forms of fandom. I then consider the 'extreme feeling' linked to the fan experience of Extreme Metal music. I illustrate that Extreme Metal music is distinct in relation to its structures of feeling that are characterised by 'extremity': that feelings are recited in relation to extreme physical feeling and 'extreme romance'. Finally, I position my respondents' relationship to Extreme Metal subculture as a 'feeling community'. I argue the subculture can be understood through a consideration of Extreme Metal's structures of feeling and that they are expressed and identified with through notions of authentic feeling, united feeling, fan labours and the extreme feeling of Extreme Metal music genre fandom.

Prior to a discussion of the research group data on these issues, the chapter begins with a consideration of the terminology of 'emotion' and 'feeling' in

order to locate my research within a body of literature that follows differing interpretations of both emotion and feeling, and suggests an approach to interpret the social nature of feelings.

Emotion-Feelings

The terms 'emotions' and 'feelings' have been given various meanings within academic literature. I, therefore, wish to briefly introduce the disputes around these terminologies, and the approaches to them within various disciplines and clarify what I mean by the term 'feeling'. I highlight the relational and social nature of feelings and outline Brennan's (2003) 'local structures of feeling' as a useful theoretical tool to apply to a consideration of the character of Extreme Metal music and the social and cultural relations surrounding it.

Both 'emotions' and 'feelings' are difficult concepts to explain and have been considered in a variety of ways within academic literature. Within the sociology of emotion, there is little consideration about feeling, with a focus upon emotions interpreted through actions rather than feelings. Ongoing debate in the sociology of emotions has centred upon the definition of emotions and how they should be studied (Craib, 1995; Williams and Bendelow, 1996). At the centre of this debate is a disagreement about the nature of emotion, whether one should consider it in relation to social and cultural construction or in relation to biology. Williams and Bendelow (1998: xvi) have argued that one way to bridge these differences is "to view emotions as existentially embodied modes of being, which involve an *active* engagement with both culture and

self" a definition, which spans the nature/culture divide. The study of emotion in psychology has also focused upon the nature of emotion, with approaches split in relation to nature/culture. The phenomenological perspective, argues that an individual's interpretation of sensations is emotion and the experience of emotion is integral to selfhood and the way we deal with others. For example, Denzin (1984) has argued that emotions are 'self-feelings', which give a person a sense of self and of knowing the self, so that in effect, "people are their emotions".

Within the context of academic discourse, feelings are typically viewed in relation to emotion, and most commonly, emotions are portrayed as a symbolization of feelings. The varied and conflicting descriptions of emotion and feeling may be because they are not suited to such precise categorisation, and because there are 'grey areas' between the categories (Lupton, 1998). This can be seen in my respondents' interchangeable use of the two terms to refer to both inner-thoughts and affective states. 'Feelings', therefore, can be associated with emotion, but unlike emotion, they do not necessarily have a physical expression. Denzin (1984) claims that 'self-feeling', is temporarily embodied, it includes bodily sensations alongside the feelings of the moral self. In considering feelings, therefore, one must consider the embodied self that experiences and feels the social world alongside the social influences that construct how the self perceives feelings. The way in which we interpret feeling is influenced by culture. For example, when a person feels 'love' they may, or may not, associate it with a number of physical reactions and such a

feeling is not easy to define without cultural reference. The way we define

feelings is relational, because we rely on cultural vocabularies and discourses,

to recognise how we feel. Our feelings contain elements of belief, judgment

and intention developed in social life (Middleton, 1990). This is demonstrated

by Hochschild's (1998: 6) consideration of the bride's feelings:

> How does the bride define her feelings? She draws from a *prior*
> *set of ideas about what feelings are feel-able*. She has to rely on
> a prior notion of what feelings are 'on the cultural shelf', pre-
> acknowledged, pre-named, pre-articulated, culturally available
> to be felt.

Our definitions and descriptions of feelings are, therefore, always second-hand

and relational. We define feeling through the emotional vocabularies, speech

genres and discourses available to us (Burkitt, 1997; 2002). Through these, we

reflect upon our feelings and identify our emotions.

Like the Bakhtinian 'social nature of language', our choice and use of language

to express feeling depends upon the meaning already within the given speech

community. By considering the language used by Extreme Metal fans in

articulating feelings, one can discern the 'feeling structures' of Extreme Metal

music and community. In his discussion of public mourning, in relation to the

Hillsborough football stadium disaster and the death of Princess Diana,

Brennan (2003) uses the term 'local structures of feeling' to refer to the way in

which people within a specific locality used similar language and expressions to articulate their feelings of loss. This is adopted from William's (1984) use of the term 'structures of feeling' to describe a particular sense of life: the ways and experiences of community that are actively felt but hardly need expression. For Brennan (2003), 'local structures of feeling' are 'totemic'. They are symbolic reflections of the wider community. Brennan, (2003) drew on the term because there was no theoretical language of football feeling and of mourning. It serves to highlight the locality of feeling and that feeling is a rule-governed space. Extreme Metal's 'structures of feeling', I argue, are located in the extreme, the familiar and intimate, and exist as a rule-governed space shown in the subculture's taste and habitus, kinship, labours and performance.

My previous chapters demonstrated that my respondents had collective experiences and strong communal sentiments centred around and represented by the notion of the Extreme Metal 'scene'. The research group used the term 'scene' to refer to the community they felt part of. For my respondents the 'scene' was everything the community wanted it to be; it operated as a form of self-representation. For those individuals, at least, the Extreme Metal subculture served to work as a symbol under which they could unite and identify. I argue in this chapter that, in particular, they united via their shared feelings.

I have so far shown that feeling is a difficult concept to clarify and that it has a relational, cultural quality. I have argued that Brennan's (2003) conceptual

analysis of 'structures of feeling' is useful in unravelling the nature of music genre fandom and the Extreme Metal subculture in relation to feeling. In this chapter, I will consider the distinct structures of feeling of Extreme Metal music and Extreme Metal subculture. Firstly, the relationship between music and feeling highlighted by my respondents is addressed to reveal that music offered them a specific relationship with feeling.

Music and/as Feeling

In many respects, music has distinct qualities that make it closely related to our feelings. Through comprising a significant element of mass markets and a globalized consumer culture, music is consumed in highly personalized ways and has linked biographical feelings and memories (DeNora, 2000; Williams, 2001). Listening to music has varied effects depending upon the taste and mood of the listener and the context or situation in which it is heard. For example, one's feelings may differ depending on whether one is listening to music alone, with friends, whilst working, or at a live concert. People bring themselves to music, which inevitably influences their response and their feelings. A song may sound conventionally joyful but the listener may have feelings of sadness while listening to it. Likewise, a person who has never heard music from a genre such as Extreme Metal may only hear a confusion of noise, which inevitably will influence their inner interpretation of what is heard.

There has been some academic recognition of the relationship between music and the emotions. Sacks (2007), has investigated music's power on the brain, arguing a profound neurological connection between brains and music, distinct from language and embedded deeply into the human condition. Sacks (2007: 285) views music as both emotional and intellectual: "often when we listen to music, we are conscious of both: we may be moved to the depths even as we appreciate the formal structure of a composition". Music's power to evoke or enhance valued emotional states, Sloboda (2005) claims, is a key reason why people engage with it and identifies emotional response to be an outcome of cognition, such as the intuitive structural analysis which goes on when listening to music. Alternatively, DeNora (2000) asserts that it is the temporal, unravelling and communicative nature of music that is a central reason for its ability to stir the listener's feelings. DeNora highlights that music is used to work through moods, to get out of moods, for 'venting', and that, in effect; it is used to enhance and maintain desired states of feeling and bodily energy. In turn, she argues that music is not only used to express an internal emotional state but is a resource for 'knowing how one feels'. In discussions with my respondents, music was related to feelings in several ways: it was located in relation to transferred feeling, identification work, and as a language of feeling.

Transferred Feeling

Music listeners bring their own lives, memories and feelings to the experience of listening and place their own meanings onto music. In addition, it can be assumed that music involves the transference of feelings. In relation to

mourning, Johnson (1999) and Brennan (2003) have described 'transferred feelings' as having less to do with the object they are placed on to, and more to do with the life of the subject. They place the UK public's reactions and responses to the death of Princess Diana and the 'Hillsborough Incident' as moments when people's previously contained feelings from their private lives were set loose in mass public outpouring. Similarly, music can amplify and set loose our everyday feelings. Research group member, Jack described an incident where he felt unable to listen to a piece of music:

> Jack: Last week we [himself and Ben] were talking online, and you [to Ben] were saying 'oh yeah that new *Alcest*[107] album, listen to it!' And it was after I had my dog put down a couple of weeks ago and I [pauses] two minutes into the album – <u>Off</u>. I couldn't listen to the album at all. So yeah, it definitely amplified [feelings], you know?

This particular piece of music amplified Jack's feelings and reflected them back to him, so much so that he had to turn the music off, in order to turn off his feelings which were related to the mourning of his loss. This anecdote indicates how the listener's 'self' may be implicated within this overall experience. Music touched his already existing feelings even as he reached out,

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[107] *Alcest* is a French band who originally played 'raw' (distorted guitar, low production) Black Metal but now draw from other genre influences such as alternative rock.

to experience something else. Respondent descriptions of taste also revealed

the transference of feeling, with distaste being related to a failure to 'connect':

Liam: I think it is a really bogus [bad] thing when you get a

band that gives you a real emotional response and so you

buy some more stuff [by the band] and it doesn't [give

an emotional response]. It is not necessarily bad it

doesn't connect with you [pauses] it feels, I don't know,

I think it's just a terrible feeling.

Ben: I know what you mean.

NA: Yeah, it's like, you feel let down.

Liam: Like, you buy their latest album and it's great, then you

buy their first album and it doesn't do that for you, and

it's like, 'oh no'.

The failure of music to "connect" with the listener is a failure to trigger feeling,

resulting in feeling "let down", "terrible" and shocked. Such disappointment

suggests that listeners' feelings are central in music fan attachments. Our

relationship with music might be said to be one of 'transferred feelings'; the

relationship between music and feeling in effect makes the listener moved,

connected, comforted and understood.

Music is not simply an expression of emotion it also gives us a sense of 'self' and 'being' through feeling. As DeNora (2000) has argued, music serves as a resource for 'knowing how one feels', it is a form of identification work we take part in, in an attempt to understand our selves. This was observable in Liam's description of what made music important to him:

> Liam: The thing is, it [music] speaks to you. It takes a feeling
> you have already had, and it either brings it out, or
> magnifies it or makes you look at it in a new way or
> uncovers it. And I think that's the beauty of it [music]
> really.

Here Liam describes music as a communicator of feeling, enabling the listener to experience a feeling and reflecting feeling in a multitude of ways. In so doing, music may help the listener to understand his/her feelings and, therefore, to communicate something of the listener's 'self'. Music's "beauty" thus lies in its ability to unravel the 'self' via feeling. The interviewees in DeNora's (2000: 67) study of music in everyday life, experienced music in relation to 'mood' in several ways. The setting, social relationships, the feeling 'self', and the music influenced the interviewees' moods so that "music *was* the mood, and the mood, the music". Research group conversation revealed that music was used to understand mood, reflect it, manage it and experience it:

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Ben: Sometimes when I'm sad if I put on sad music I will feel

much better, lifted out of it.

Liam: I think you can't put sad music on if you are feeling

incredibly happy and straight away be hit by, you know,

an iron block of misery.

Ben: Yeah? I don't know. That's how I felt when I put on the

Weakling[108] CD today.

Liam: What, really happy then put it on and thought 'urrgh'

[expressing negativity].

Ben: Yeah.

Liam: That is quite interesting. I still feel very 'arrgh'

[expressing excitement] After having listened to my

song, which you didn't like.

In this conversation, there is some disagreement about how feeling is

experienced in relation to music. Ben indicates that in his opinion music can

manage feeling or 'mood'. By labelling music as "sad", he indicates that it can

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[108] *Weakling* is an atmospheric Black Metal band from North America.

encapsulate a feeling, but he also describes the process of being "lifted out" of a feeling. Music, therefore, is situated as a mirror reflecting feeling back to him and through his recognition of the reflection; he is able to change. In contrast, Liam views music as having the power to produce feeling. Being hit by "an iron block of misery" suggests an incapability of escape and vulnerability of the listener to the 'mood' of the music. In addition, Liam demonstrates his difficulty in using language to articulate how music makes him feel. He abandons language to describe his feelings using instead facial expressions and sounds ("I still feel very arrgh"), in so doing he illustrates that music is a more successful language of feeling, in that it is used to produce, describe and understand feeling. Music, therefore, offered my respondents the opportunity to take part in identification work, to identify how they felt and as a result understand something of themselves.

Inchoate Feeling

The research group regularly struggled to verbalise their feelings in relation to music. It appeared that language often failed them when they attempted to explain how Extreme Metal music made them feel. Towards the end of our research group session that focused upon Extreme Metal music and feelings, Chloe brought up the subject of the difficult relationship between language and feeling:

> Chloe: Even though I'm thinking it [emotion/feelings], I found
> it hard to put into words.

Liam: Yeah, you have to kinda intellectualize it almost. I think
as soon as you try and put a strong feeling into words, it
loses some of its impact because you are immediately
limiting something that you can't describe.

Chloe and Liam highlight the struggle to place feelings into language and the process by which the feeling cannot be completely described. The vocalising of feeling is "limiting" because one resorts to the closest reference in the available cultural vocabulary. After listening to a piece of Extreme Metal music played in a group session, Liam attempted to describe his enjoyment of the music and how it had made him feel, thereby illustrating this unclear, untranslatable feeling:

Liam: I really enjoyed it. I felt that it was very deep and I'd say
as you listened to it, it kinda drew you in and it is quite
an all encompassing listening experience. I don't think it
was particularly melancholy or uplifting or anything like
that. But it was very, I don't know it's hard to explain
[pauses]. I was just very into it really, like definitely
emotionally charged. I'm not sure if I can explain it
better than that.

Here Liam finds that he cannot articulate his feelings into language, indicating that he cannot find the cultural vocabulary through describing what the feeling was not; yet at the same time he indicates that it was "deep" and "emotionally charged". Feelings, therefore, may seem to be separate from language in that they often remained inchoate or unspoken. Ben also described his connection to music in relation to such inchoate feeling:

> Ben: I suppose music reflects emotion much more and in a more mysterious way. Where you can totally feel it, without understanding why.

Ben considers music's attached emotions as "mysterious", indefinable, and outside rational language. Music seemed to offer my respondents an ability to express the inchoate feelings, which they had. Research group discussions not only highlighted the relationship between music and feeling but also positioned music *as* feeling.

Music is unique because it has a distinct social character and cultural importance in relation to feeling. It offers us an affective experience. For my respondents, the relationship between music and feeling was multifaceted. Music is subject to our own transferred feelings and can be used to understand and manage feeling. Music is shown to offer us feelings that, in effect, help us to connect with the self. Music is also positioned by my respondents as a language that speaks feelings that are inchoate, or outside of language. Such

qualities can be related to any genre of music and its fandom; and highlights that the fan relationship is beyond feelings for the artist (which can only be part of it), rather it is the distinct relationship the fan has with the music which can be seen as the key character of music genre fandom.[109] I now turn to discuss the qualities of Extreme Metal music that separate it as a genre (and, as a result, the attachments of its fans). My starting point for this discussion is that Extreme Metal music encompasses distinct structures of feeling that can be related to 'extremity' and, therefore, 'extreme feeling'.

Extreme Metal, Extreme Feeling

Although many aspects of my respondents' emphasis upon feeling can be related to wider music fandom, Extreme Metal has distinct differences from other music genres. Extreme Metal as a genre is unconventional to other genres of music in its form, tonality and composition. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Extreme Metal presents an aggressive sound through powerful vocals; the utilisation of grunts, screams or other distorted noises as vocal extremes of tempo; and amplified distortion. The distinct qualities and characteristics of Extreme Metal can, therefore, be related to the experience of 'extremity': the feeling structures that differentiate it from other music genres. This section considers respondent accounts of listening to Extreme Metal and experiencing live Extreme Metal music to reveal Extreme Metal music's feeling structures. I look firstly at the experience of 'extremity' in relation to physical feeling. I then go on to consider my respondents' language, in particular their adoption

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[109] In Chapter 2, I have highlighted that academic studies of music fandom often solely pay attention to the relationship between fan and music artist/celebrity.

of romance and spiritual language, in articulating their feelings and affective attachments to Extreme Metal music.

Extreme Physical Feeling

My respondents often located Extreme Metal music in relation to the experience of 'extreme' forms of embodied feeling; in particular, the impact of Extreme Metal was frequently discussed in terms of physical shock and mental exhaustion. This was present in respondent descriptions of the appeal of listening to Extreme Metal and in relation to their experiences of live events. Such extreme physical feelings were portrayed in Rob's description of his motivation to listen to music:

> Rob: Yeah, I just really like the really aggressive music, where I really wanna feel like I've had ten pounds of shit kicked out of me by the time I've finished listening.

Rob expresses a desire to be physically affected through the listening experience. Such extreme sentiment may sound unappealing to the outsider, yet it is this kind of reaction that the respondents often referred to (and often desired) when describing their experience of live Extreme Metal music. Liveness can be related to the experience of extremity via feeling and physicality, as Chloe's memory story of an encounter with live music described:

Chloe: Head-banging, hair flying, sweat pouring, fists punching, bodies shoving, drinks thrown, people falling, picked up again, mosh-pit, devil horns, shouting, screaming, united in Metal. It could be any gig. The name of the band doesn't matter. All that matters is that the instant the DJ stops playing and the band walks on stage. The first note of the night makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. The first song, if I know it, gets me to the front so I can see the band, nodding my head in time with the music, singing along if I know the words. As the set goes on I'll probably start head-banging […] After the gig, I usually stink of spilt beer and sweat, my neck aches and my ears ring. But I can't wait to do it again.

Chloe's listing of her 'live' encounter emphasizes the exhausting, overwhelming barrage of physicality of the Extreme Metal gig, with music being experienced and expressed through the body. Despite the exhaustion and impact upon her body, she wants to repeat the experience. The group members claimed amplified Extreme Metal music gave a unique physical encounter:

Chloe: With the bass and the drums you can feel them from the inside. Sometimes if I stand in the wrong place, it gets at a frequency that makes me feel really sick, and I have to

> move until I can find a better place to stand. But once
>
> you get the right frequency, the right place, it can
>
> actually add to the experience.

NA: I love that bass feeling and the double bass pedal.

Liam: Yeah, I like to feel it in my breastbone.

Ben: Yeah, part of live music is the vibrations. Some bands
really aim to increase that. I suppose to the real extreme
that's what *Sunn O)))*[110] is trying to do, isn't it? That real
loud bass, some people can't take it so they have to go to
the toilet to shit or be sick; but then some [people] lie on
the floor spread eagled going "ohhh" Just so, they can
get their body in as much contact with the ground to feel
as much vibration as possible.

These accounts make visible the embodied experience of live music. Ben's

extreme example of the bodily effects of amplified music's vibrations and

frequencies upon the audience, (that Extreme Metal has the power to induce

physical sickness and discomfort or intense bodily pleasure), indicates that the

Extreme Metal music experience is related to experiencing 'extremity'. These

extreme bodily sensations may remind us of our breathing bodies. The tensing

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[110] *Sunn O)))* (pronounced 'sunn') is a band associated with 'Drone Metal' playing with slow guitar and low guitar tuning at high volume.

of muscles, the pounding felt in the breastbone, are ways in which we are reminded of our physical selves and as a result, feel alive. The experience of live Extreme Metal music also offers the audience a moment of amplified feeling. In my memory story about a physical experience of a live event, I described a moment that impacted on me. As I recalled my experience, I distinctly remembered sensual and attached feelings:

> NA: We were late arriving at the venue and we didn't know they [*Enslaved*[111]] were going to be playing straight away. The whole venue was packed with people. I was pushing through the small gaps between broad shoulders. Everyone seemed taller than me. I couldn't see anything of the stage and only could see a small grey corner of a projection screen. I gave up trying, found my own space (a very hot and cramped one) and stood listening. The music ran through my body so that the hairs on the back of my neck stood up. I knew the music, but it was far more intense, the bass feeling in my gut, the drums beating through me. Because I couldn't see, my concentration upon the music seemed so much more powerful, and as the music raised so did my heart. It was an engulfing experience. I stood still, but felt so much energy.

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[111] *Enslaved* is a Norwegian Black Metal band.

Here, the ecstatic force of the music gave me intense bodily and emotional feeling that overwhelmed me. The amplified music makes me experience Extreme Metal physically (via vibrations), but I also describe the overwhelming, inchoate feeling linked to music's energy. The experiences related to Extreme Metal's 'extremity', are embodied connecting the physical body with self-feelings.

It may be the case that the physical feelings one experiences from music, particularly at the live/public music event, may be affected by the consumption of alcohol and illicit drugs or the experience of violence (such as in the mosh pit). In Malbon's (1999) account of clubbing, he illustrates music and dancing assists his respondents' experience of *exstasis* and a momentary loss of self. Yet, his study identifies that it is the interconnectedness between the bodily experience of both music and the drug ecstasy (MDMA) that gives the clubbers emotions and sensations. Although there have been distinct links made between the experience of club cultures and rave/dance music with the consumption of drugs such as ecstasy, the Extreme Metal subculture is not clearly experienced in such a way.[112] The consumption of illicit drugs did not appear to be a characteristic of subcultural participation or membership for my respondents. In research group discussions, there was no reference given to the taking of illicit drugs, but there was mention of consuming alcohol and of

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[112] In the Extreme Metal subculture the most common drug is alcohol with cannabis also being present but other illicit drugs do not openly appear.

being drunk.[113] The feelings derived from live Extreme Metal may also be derived from the physical practices of participation. A key experience of live Heavy Metal, Weinstein (2000: 215-6) argues, is not only the sound and volume but also the practice of headbanging: "part of the impact of heavy metal music on the emotions is based on moving the body in time with the beat". Although the most visible forms of physical practice associated with Extreme Metal, such as head-banging were clearly part of some of my respondents' experiences and may have given particular physical feeling; it is apparent that it was also the experience of Extreme Metal music, itself, that had an effect upon my respondents and myself both emotionally and physically.

Extreme Romance

I have, so far, highlighted the unique physical feelings that my respondents associated with Extreme Metal music that can be related to the experience of 'extremity'. I now consider the shared languages of my respondents in describing their feelings that highlight Extreme Metal music's particular structures of feeling. I consider respondent use of romance and spiritual languages that centred on power and love in their explanations and memories of their taste, their descriptions from our music elicitation work, and accounts of live music's impact.

The themes of love, power and ecstatic/divine power can be linked to the Romantic Movement. The Romantic Movement privileged feeling over reason

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[113] Although the Extreme Metal gig experience is predominantly accompanied by the consumption of alcohol. The wide consumption of alcohol by UK adults means that it would be difficult to claim this was a distinct characteristic of this particular subculture.

and imagination over perception. Rational control was deemed stifling with passion perceived as the true source of human feeling that could reawaken that which was blocked by reason (Williams, 2001: 20). The Romantic Movement spoke of the divine, not as a named God but a supernatural force, which existed both in the natural world and within the spirit of each individual. The self was positioned as essentially divine because the passions within man were seen as the ultimate source of all thought, feeling and action, which provided the potential for every man to become like god (Campbell, 1987). For the Romantic Movement, love, therefore, expressed sensibility and represented authentic and true feeling (Wilson, 1999). Love is an undefined term and is characterised as such: "Romantic convention tells us that love is in essence indefinable, mysterious, outside rational discourse. Its meaning is held to be knowable only intuitively, at the level of feeling, and cannot be communicated in precise terms" (Jackson, 1993: 206-7). Love, as romantic discourse, is therefore, argued to exist as a second-hand term already in circulation, already familiar and waiting to be appropriated (Jackson, 1993; Wetherall, 1996). In his studies of college boy's accounts of their experiences of being in love, Redman (1999; 2001) argues that romance provided his respondents with a 'cultural repertoire', a narrative resource or set of discursive practices through which they negotiated and made sense of their cultural world. Like Redman, I argue that romance provided my respondents with a 'cultural repertoire'. The romantic and spiritual languages that are linked to the Romantic Movement were invoked by my respondents to capture what everyday language failed to

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capture; to express and make sense of the feelings they experienced in relation to Extreme Metal music and its extremity.

My respondents described the appeal of Extreme Metal in relation to attached feelings that were expressed through romance language. Music offered an experience of power and their attachment was related to romantic love with feelings of passion. For example, when Liam tried to explain his taste and attachment to Extreme Metal, his account described a passionate connection with music:

> Liam: The trick is that it gets you in any way really. No matter what it's expressing. Certainly, before I heard Metal, I'd never heard music that got into my blood like I heard it and it had an effect on me beyond me going 'um, oh'.

> NA: Yeah?

> Liam: You know, something that actually catches you in your chest, like you know, once it's there it will never get out. That's why you end up addicted to it really isn't it? I don't think anyone could kind of just listen to Metal on some cerebral level, you know?

Liam describes Metal's powerful affect upon himself as unavoidable and uncontrollable ("it gets you") [114] and also describes it like an infection or addictive drug, ("got into my blood"). His comment, "something that catches you in your chest...once it's there it will never get out", expresses the strong (and indeed, passionate) attachment and commitment Liam has to Extreme Metal. Liam also referred to his passionate connection with music when describing his reaction to Chloe's choice of music for music elicitation (*Hypocrisy's "Fractured Millennium"[115]*):

> Liam: I think it is really uplifting. It builds me up until it gives
>
> me tingling from the inside, just from hearing.
>
> Jack: It's when it sorta kicks in.
>
> Liam: Yeah it just gives me a pure rush of love. Just of loving
>
> music.

The "pure rush of love" describes the uplifting feelings Extreme Metal gives Liam. Such passionate statements place Extreme Metal as a powerful force that gives Liam feeling. Likewise, power, as a feeling, was the key motivational force that influenced Ben's taste in Extreme Metal:

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[114] This immediate affect is also relatable to the notion of 'love at first listen' I described in Chapter 7.

[115] Chloe's choice was the track, *fractured millennium* by the band *Hypocrisy* from the (1999) album *Hypocrisy*. *Hypocrisy* is a Swedish Death Metal band.

Ben: I don't think it's anything about Metal. I think if I'm

going to invest my time in some music, then it happens

that there's more Metal I like than any other genre.

Because of the reaction I have to it, because I like

feeling the feeling of power, the feeling of all

enveloping sadness and I just don't get the feelings I like

as much from other music

Although at first stating, "I don't think it's anything about Metal", Ben

indicates that it is the two opposing states of feeling: power and vulnerability

that are central to his appreciation of it. He identifies that it is actually

something about Extreme Metal genre and its feeling structures that make him

"invest" in it. The extreme feelings related to love and power, therefore, unite

these respondent accounts of attachment.

In order to uncover our attachments to music and how we might express

feeling as individuals, I used one of the research group meetings to concentrate

upon the topic of music and feeling and utilised 'music elicitation' within the

group interview. The respondents' descriptions of their feelings that emerged

also drew upon romantic expression, particularly concerning power. This can

be seen in Ben's description of how a piece of music I had chosen made him

feel:

Ben: As soon as that track [*Darkthrone's 'En as i dype skogen'*[116]] starts I feel like this change comes over my body and I feel [pauses] I feel totally powerful. I feel like I am standing like on my own on a wind-swept plain, or something like that, and I feel like it brings out something. Like, it puts me in a trance-like, almost psychotic, mood. There is something really primal in me, that like [pauses] it doesn't come out here. I'm not really an aggressive person but it makes me just [pauses] I don't know, it's hard to explain.

Ben's response is positioned as something 'primal' as an inherent response to the untamed power of music. Ben's description of his feelings focuses on the transformation or metamorphosis that he goes through while listening to the music. The music gives Ben feelings of power. This power is presented as exhilarating ("like standing on a wind-swept plain") but also dangerous, (bringing out aggression and a "psychotic mood"). The description of power is almost like the language of God, in that a divine power is also a potentially destructive power, hence he is using a religious metaphor in his vocabulary of feeling. These feelings are also referenced against a backdrop of the romantic imagery of an awe-inspiring dramatic landscape, in this account the "wind-swept plain". Romance language, therefore, expressed the extreme feeling that

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[116] My choice of music was the track *En as i dype skogen* from the *Darkthrone* album *Transilvanian Hunger* (1994). *Darkthrone* is a Norweigen Black Metal band, their album *Transilvanian Hunger* is characterised by its low-production recording, its musical simplicity (repetitive structures) and harsh vocals.

Ben experienced from Extreme Metal. After listening to his song of choice,

Liam described his response in relation to music's emotional effect and power:

Liam: I think it [*Ensiferum's 'LAI LAI HEI'*[117]] is one of the

most beautiful songs I have ever heard. It is going to

sound like bollocks to you guys, because you [the

research group] just heard it and thought nothing of it,

but, I really like the start with the folk[118]. It's really

earthy and it's singing in another language and I think it

is quite evocative of like, oral tradition. And the actual

guitar itself, there's a bit about two minutes in where

they are playing a melody and one of them just plays a

kinda off note and I think that's awesome. But the bit

towards the end, when he's just singing and it's just his

voice rising against the music, it sounds; I think it

sounds really vulnerable and really powerful at the same

time. And, I just think it is one of the most incredible

bits I have ever heard in a song ever. I've seen it live and

it has so nearly reduced me to tears because it's just

[pauses] I just can't explain it. It just really provokes

something.

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[117] Liam's choice was the track *LAI LAI HEI* by the band *Ensiferum* on the album *Iron* (2004). *Ensiferum* are a Finnish Folk Metal band.
[118] Liam refers here to 'folk' to refer to the use of acoustic guitar, melody and clean vocal.

The song's appeal is placed as "awesome" and "powerful". Such words are used to represent the emotional charge that the music has for Liam, and the feelings he cannot place into language. When Liam tries to describe the song's effect he struggles and then gives up ("I just can't explain it. It just really provokes something"). Liam describes the track as "beautiful", a love and aesthetic appreciation in relation to the song structure, tone and vocal; and also the sound, which he describes in relation to power and vulnerability, two extremes of feeling that can stir the listener to tears. It is this combination of what he interprets as power and vulnerability that provokes the feelings he struggles to explain. The language of power used to describe responses to Extreme Metal may represent the power of being moved or music's ability to make us feel moved, feel alive or feel love, whilst expressing something of the extremity of feeling structured in Extreme Metal music.

The research group's descriptions of experiencing live Extreme Metal similarly centred upon amplified feelings in relation to power, through descriptions of music's 'awesomeness' and 'energy'. The effect of live music in Ben's memory of an experience at Wacken festival[119] was described by him in relation to a powerful force:

> Ben: I was totally exhausted because it was so hot. I had
>
>   drunk far too much and hadn't drunk anything that
>
>   wasn't beer and had been head-banging so I was an

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[119] Wacken festival or 'Wacken Open Air (W.O.A)' is a Metal festival held annually in Germany

absolute physical wreck. I lay on the ground and closed

my eyes and thought 'I'm gonna fall asleep'. A few

minutes later they [a band] came on stage and started

playing. I just felt the irresistible urge to get up again

and start moving my body […] I couldn't keep still and

by the end of the first song, I had rushed forwards into

the crowd and was head-banging furiously throughout

the whole set [performance]. And all the aching and pain

and tiredness in my body seemed to be alleviated by the

music. Even after they had stopped playing, I felt really

revitalised and full of energy.

Here, Ben describes his body's response as unrestrained, and that the music gave him "energy". Ben, therefore, places live music as a mysterious and emotive force and his response as a magical revival of self; his body is "alleviated" and "revitalised" by the live music. This encounter with music is likened to an encounter with the supernatural force of divine power, which reawakens the senses. My respondents' accounts of live Extreme Metal music described an energy that they experienced both physically and emotionally and that they related to power and love. Liam and Ben both described crying as a reaction to live music and such energy:

Liam: […] several occasions in the past I've seen a band play

live and I have ended up in tears. It's not because I'm

sad, or it's a sad band. It's the excitement and the all-

encompassing power of the music that rolls over me, and

the tears are a physical expression of the awesomeness

of the music and what that means to me.

Later in the same interview, Ben admitted that he had had similar experiences

to Liam:

Ben: Ha-ha, I'm glad you said that [crying] actually because

        I've done that [cried] at gigs, but I've never admitted it

        to anyone before because I thought it was wimpy as hell.

        But if it's the right song.

Liam: Yeah.

Ben: Or the right group of people. It doesn't take; it's not for

        that long.

Liam: It's not like blubbing [weeping] either.

Ben: But it's just that first song. I just have to blink back the

        tears.

Liam: Sometimes it's just a riff that makes your eyes wet.

Ben: Yeah.

Such an affective state was not produced through sadness but a culmination of feelings and energy, along with their personal attachments to the music. Liam describes crying as a response to music's power and "awesomeness" that is perceived as an uncontrollable force that cannot be contained, a force of uncontained passion and power. The two respondents' attempts to explain their emotional outpouring as separate from crying: that it is not weeping from tragedy, pain or anguish, but an emotional outpouring caused by pleasure, excitement and feeling. Liam and Ben distance crying from "blubbing" also, seemingly, from the fear of being regarded (in Ben's words) as "wimpy as hell", which may undermine their masculine image and related distanced judgment[120]. The power of the extremity of Extreme Metal is also revealed in that it can cause such an outpouring of feeling from its audience. The research group, therefore, used romance language to convey the extreme feelings unleashed by live Extreme Metal music.

For my respondents at least, Extreme Metal music gave the experience of 'extreme' feeling both physically and emotionally. The feeling structures of Extreme Metal are visible in respondents' use of romance and spiritual language that centres upon passion, power, ecstasy and energy. The research group located Extreme Metal music as a powerful and ecstatic force that

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[120] Distanced judgment that can be related to the research group's connoisseur values described in Chapter 5.

created self-feelings associated with love, vulnerability and being powerful. So far, this chapter has focused upon the character of music and the genre of Extreme Metal in relation to feeling and feeling structures. I now go on to consider these structures of feeling within Extreme Metal subculture that show that my respondents, as Extreme Metal fans, were participating in what can be interpreted as a 'feeling community'.

'Feeling Community'

So far, in this chapter, my respondents' accounts of feeling highlight their shared experience of Extreme Metal in relation to the experience of feeling. Extreme Metal, as a music subculture can, therefore, be related to the coming together of music fans as a 'feeling community'. Drawing on the previous chapters, what I am suggesting here is that the practices and nature of Extreme Metal subcultural community, for my respondents, can be considered in relation to the feelings they are structured around. That Extreme Metal subculture has 'structures of feeling': the specific totemicites in play that link the experience of Extreme Metal music with fan practices, notions of authenticity, kinship, membership and participation.

Following Williams (1984), Brennan (2003) argues that 'structures of feeling' are central to understanding the character and experiences of community. Extreme Metal's structures of feeling are reflections of the community itself. Although feeling appears private and personal, we have structures of feeling in common with others, as Burkitt (2002: 154) argues:

[…] feelings may be taken as private or idiosyncratic because

they have not yet received social articulation. Yet, when they

do, as often happens in literature or other art forms, we can

recognise the communality to our structures of feeling.

The communality of our structures of feeling can be related to their 'dialogic',

relational nature that can be considered in relation to Bakhtin's (1981) 'speech

community' and my own description of 'performative community' in Chapter

7, which maintains subcultural positions are created and recreated through

interaction. As with feelings themselves, they exist in relation to the cultural

vocabularies and narratives available to us. Like the respondents' shared

narrative repertoires described in the previous chapter, their accounts of feeling

help to construct the fan 'self' and collective identity. The importance of

feeling within my respondents' experiences of Extreme Metal subculture

means that one may consider they were participating in a 'feeling community'.

The term 'feeling community' is used by Maffesoli (1996) in his vision of late

modernity, which places us in 'the time of the tribes' and the rise of what he

calls 'neo-tribalism'. He argues that there has been a shift from a rationalised

social to an empathetic sociality where we seek multiple ways of 'being

together' with community being formed around feeling rather than ideology.

'Feeling community' is used by Maffesoli to describe how tribes provide us

with an opportunity to 'keep warm together' or to have 'sensual solidarities'

based on the feelings, emotions and 'collective effervescence', which can be

derived from being with others. "Collective effervescence' is a term adopted from Durkheim (1976) to describe how the emotionally charged religious ritual gives a heightened sense of participation and feelings of belonging in the collective. A music subculture (in this case the Extreme Metal subculture) can be seen to develop out of fans coming together through their shared sense of feeling. I am not arguing here (as Maffesoli (1996) may), that we are in a time of neo-tribalism where group attachments are fleeting. Rather, what I am suggesting is that music subcultures can be considered in relation to shared feelings and an empathetic sociality and thus, placed as feeling communities. Maffesoli's work, I highlighted in Chapter 3, has been taken up by postsubcultural research to express the fluidity of identity and temporary collective attachments. One can accept that identities are unstable and fractured, but as Giddens (1991) argues, in late-modernity people continue to follow the modern project of self-identity, through attempts to reflexively construct the self (i.e. via our biographies). We are, therefore, active in continuous attempts to structure and narrate our identities in order to create a sense of coherence, choice and unity. As a result, people continue to invest in and commit to collective identity and practices.

Authentic Feeling

Extreme Metal notions of authenticity were discussed in Chapter 5 to highlight community identity which, in turn, illustrated a particular 'extreme habitus' based around respondent displays of subcultural capital and 'distinctions of taste'. My respondents also used their shared feelings and 'passion' to portray

their authenticity as fans. The research group used the romance language, of passion and love in articulating their commitment to the Extreme Metal subculture and as an expression of 'authentic' fandom. This was present in respondents' exclamations about the derided figure of the 'scenester'.[121] The 'scenester' was seen to lack commitment to music identity. This lack of commitment was also described as a lack of passion:

Liam: Yeah, all these people [scenesters] who are playing around and like, I hate them. And I hate people who attach themselves to a scene, but don't really, are not really part of it.

NA: In what sense are they not part of it?

Liam: I don't think they've got the love for it.

Chloe: Mmm. Not passionate. And it's all superficial really.

Here, group members use the notion of love to define 'authentic' fandom and, in doing so, define themselves as 'authentic' subcultural members that are invested in music and their community. Not being "passionate" or not having "the love for it" presents the 'scenester' as "superficial" and unattached to Extreme Metal music and subculture. This lack of feeling and 'love' is

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[121] For a more detailed consideration of the respondents' characterisation of the 'scenester' as 'other', see Chapter 5.

presented in direct opposition to the respondents' emphasis upon feeling and their exclamations of love. Similarly, in his article on music audiences, Hesmondhalgh (2007b) illustrates that his respondents described their tastes in music (and music fan) with an emphasis upon the importance of feeling. Emotions and feelings were used to reinforce commonality and divisions. In a discussion centred on Extreme Metal genres, Liam located his taste in relation to feeling, describing to the group what he sought in music in order to justify his genre preferences:

> Liam: I like music to connect with me, and that can be through a number of different ways. It can be through atmosphere or through, you know, an immediate sort of impact that gets your adrenaline up or something like that. If it doesn't do that then I'm not interested. That's why I tend to shy away from like, brutal Death Metal, because I find it very clinical.

Liam highlights that music genres have expected feeling structures. His particular orientation to music genre is embedded in the feelings he associates with his genre preferences and his connection and reaction to music is linked to his perception of atmosphere and impact. Liam's description of the music he avoids as "clinical" notably suggests it is unemotional; it fails to interact with his feelings. His detachment from 'brutal Death metal is also objectifying, judging as it eschews its object. Taste is thus defined via the perceived feeling

structures of music genre. Feelings were the significant factor in my

respondents' explanations of their ongoing commitment to Extreme Metal

identity, when they considered the possibility of the loss of feeling; the group

were faced with a dilemma:

> Ben: Imagine you woke up tomorrow morning, you put on a
>
> CD, and you got no feelings from it. You put on all your
>
> CDs, no feelings.

> Liam: That would be horrible.

> Ben: And then, what if you got feelings when you put some
>
> Jazz on?

> Liam: That's horrific.

> Jack: Then you would listen to Jazz wouldn't you?

> Ben: Well, yeah, that is what I think.

> Liam: I suppose you would. Yeah, because your inherent
>
> passion for music just would have shifted focus, I guess.

> Chloe: Mmm, yeah. But having been listening to Metal for the
>
> past 15 years, that isn't very likely.

Here, the disappearance of feelings is likened to a loss, even bereavement, and described as "horrible" and "horrific". The group both individually and collectively claimed that they would shift their music genre fandom if they failed to 'feel', even to a music genre far removed from Metal, such as Jazz, a music genre that all respondents disliked. Despite their claims, Chloe reminds the group of the investment they have made (i.e. labour through time, effort and sacrifice spent as fan)[122] which indicates that commitment is not aligned with feelings alone. Taste and habitus intimated by the respondents highlight that authentic Extreme Metal identity is also constructed around 'passion' and the feelings associated with music genre: the feeling structures of Extreme Metal.

United Feeling

In Chapter 5, I noted how shared habitus and distinctions of taste were central to creating kinship between my respondents as Extreme Metal fans. However, it was also respondents' identification via feeling, and intimacy that structured Extreme Metal community kinship. They related to one another through the similarity of their feelings. The desire for identification via feeling was shown in Liam's account of an ex-girlfriend's failure to understand his relationship to music:

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[122] A more detailed discussion of fan labours takes place in Chapter 6.

> Liam: I remember lying in bed with someone and they put a record on, which they liked, and me saying "what do you like about this? What does it make you feel and stuff?" And they just didn't understand what I was asking. She was just like, "it's my favourite song" and I was like, "why?" you know, and I just thought, "fuck. You don't understand".

This failure to understand the relationship between music and feeling was seen by Liam to be a sign that his ex-partner did not understand his 'self' or her 'self' either. It was clear that for my respondents, a sense of kinship was created through the identification of feelings in others. Research group discussion often indicated that to be an Extreme Metal music fan one had to have certain qualities related to personality. In one such discussion this took on the notion of having the capacity to feel and to be self-aware:

> NA: I don't know. Some people really don't seem to understand, like when you get really passionate about music, some people just look at you like you've lost the plot.

Liam: Mmm, you have to be a certain kind of person to be into music because it requires effort, and it requires you to be open with yourself.

Ben: So do you think there is something good about being into music?

Liam: I don't think it makes you a better person, kinda thing. I might be wrong here, but you need a certain level of self-awareness and sensitivity. Not sensitivity as in being wimpy. But, yeah, you've got to be a person, like open to art and being in touch with himself, and things like that, to be able to really appreciate music.

Chloe: True. And situations where we've got non-metal friends they're quite strange. They're long-term friendships that have built up out of other stuff aren't they? They are very strange friends.

This discussion reinforces and confirms the group's belief that a connection to music is also a connection with the 'self'. It is notable that Liam does not want feeling to be associated with being "wimpy" and thus emasculation. Instead he stresses the importance of being "open to art", using the language of connoisseurship to indicate he is part of a certain class of people with a distinct

way of seeing (or in this case, hearing)[123]. Chloe describes her non-music fan friends as "strange", which indicates the importance of such identifications for kinship. The discussion highlights that kinship is reinforced with the notion of sharing personality traits related to one's capacity to understand the feeling structures of music.

Love's Labours

I have argued throughout my empirical analysis, that my respondents' Extreme Metal habitus was based around a specific 'work ethic' with the becoming and continued performance of Extreme Metal fan identity depending upon the processes of learning and labouring, alongside the defending, of subcultural capital. Such work was repetitive and familiar but it was also pleasurable. Indeed all of my research group members spoke of their love for the labours of fandom and subculture during their accounts of being attached. Respondents were keen to emphasize the extent of their 'love' for music, which was used as a benchmark to demonstrate their commitment to their fan identities. They highlighted the importance of music, the everyday use of music in their lives and their desire for their identities to be associated with it:

> Liam: Some of my strong feelings for Metal are so important
>
> and all-consuming that I wouldn't pass down an
>
> opportunity to do something Metal [pauses] I wouldn't
>
> ever, well I couldn't pass up the opportunity to associate

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[123] This additionally reinforces the argument made in Chapter 5, that the Extreme Metal fan positions him/herself as connoisseur, blurring the boundary between 'low' and 'high' cultural distinctions.

myself more with you know, what is probably my

greatest passion.

Chloe:　The only time I have never wanted to listen to music is

when we just come back from a festival and I have had a

musical overload the entire weekend. I just want to sit in

the peace and quiet.

Ben:　The first thing I do in the morning when I wake up is put

the stereo on before I get dressed.

Liam:　I just think Metal's the most powerful force that I've

ever encountered in my life. It's just had that much of an

effect on me. So, in a way, it's kinda like a religion. You

just become dedicated to it and want it to influence

every aspect of your life.

Following Liam's statement of dedication to his "greatest passion", Chloe and

Ben in effect, make statements that prove the extent to which they listen to

music, thus indicating their authentic passion and dedication. Liam further

indicates his dedication through his comparison of music to religion, an

additional link made between Extreme Metal and its impact on respondents'

everyday lives and their dedication to it and worship of it. The statement of

"dedication" and accounts of continued commitment and 'doing' highlight the

labour involved in Extreme Metal identity and subcultural participation, which also place work as an outward sign of the fans' passionate feeling.

Extreme Feeling Community

As we have already seen, my respondents placed the live performance as a central activity for subcultural members. Each described the shared experience of feeling in relation to the live performance of music and the experience of the collective audience. In his study of clubbing, Malbon (1999) identifies the energy and euphoria that can be generated from being together and that also consolidate a collective sensibility. During group conversations, live music was presented as enhancing the sense of being a fan, because it was a place where individuals gained a sense of collective feeling and unity. In Olaveson's (2004) account of Rave culture and its relationship to religion, he considers the concept of 'the vibe' which his respondents interpreted as a kind of energy, which could not be expressed or understood in words, and could only be physically experienced as an amplified feeling or emotional state, which is collectively felt. When Liam revisited his memory of seeing the band *Hammerfall*[124], live at a festival, he described how it fuelled his feelings of unity and of collective identification with the audience:

> Liam: With *Hammerfall*. This is proper sad, all their songs are
>
>   about how Metal they are and the brotherhood of Metal.
>
>   But when you are standing in a field with like, twenty

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[124] *Hammerfall* is a Power Metal band from Sweden. Power Metal is a style of melodic Heavy Metal.

thousand people or something and the dude is singing

about how we're all Metal brothers and we are all going

[puts fist in the air] in time with each other I'm thinking

'we are all part of the universal Metal brotherhood and

it's brilliant'. [Group laughter] You do feel solidarity

and unity.

Liam indicates that shared experience, physicality and feelings lead to his

feelings of "solidarity and unity". Through believing you are having the same

experience, in particular the same feelings and emotions, as every other

member of the audience one feels connected. The interactive experience of live

music, and the feelings of being together, and of 'collective effervescence'

means that fans do not have to express feelings to have a sense of 'sensual

solidarity'. The interaction of fans via the experience and the feelings of the

live performance of music, therefore, solidified the subculture for fans, placing

them in a 'feeling community'.

The research group discussions indicate the structures of feeling within

Extreme Metal subculture. Feelings serve as a form of collective identification;

they give my respondents a sense of solidarity, authenticity and identification

and also are a key reason that they became embedded in the associated

practices, performances and labours of subculture. The Extreme Metal

subculture, for my respondents, can, therefore, be considered a 'feeling

community': a performative community that is created and exists in interaction and that also serves as a form of self-representation for the Extreme Metal fan.

Conclusion

My respondents' shared experiences of feelings in relation to music have been shown as a key factor in the taking up of a music identity and the subsequent experience of music subculture. My respondents' experience of the Extreme Metal subculture is via structures of feeling that help create their collective bond. Extreme Metal music is totemic in that it (via structures of feeling) represents the 'clan personified'. Extreme Metal's 'feeling structures' communicate something of the culture that surrounds it. The cultural nuances of Extreme Metal I have discussed in the previous chapters, such as practices of kinship and distinction; labouring to learn and defend Extreme Metal identity, and my respondents' shared speech, narratives and performances are all factors that place Extreme Metal subculture as a 'feeling community'.

There exists a distinct relationship between music and feeling, listening to music involves transference, it is a resource for knowing how one feels; and serves as a language of inchoate feeling. Extreme Metal music has distinct feeling structures related to its 'extremity' and the experience of what I have called 'extreme feeling'. Respondents used a distinct vocabulary to describe such extreme feeling. Their adoption of romance language and the themes of love and power highlight that the Extreme Metal music genre has distinct feeling structures. The distinct relationship between music and feeling and the

Extreme Metal music genre and feeling highlight that studies of fandom should not only focus upon fandom of artists and that music genre fandom is a distinct form of fandom.

This chapter has illustrated the deeper modes of identifications and attachments of music fandom. It has shown that the structures of feeling within Extreme Metal subculture symbolise the social identity and character of the subculture and its members. Feeling is a collective experience that my respondents united around and characterised their fan and subcultural activities.

The empirical chapters of this thesis have investigated my respondents' experiences and identifications in the Extreme Metal subculture. I have identified their participation in a *taste culture* with shared habitus, values and distinction. I have highlighted their participation in a *learning culture*, which involved the ongoing processes of *labouring to learn* and *labouring to defend.* Furthermore, I have illustrated their participation in a *performative community* via collective interactions such as shared speech, story-telling and genre practices. Such a *performative community* is, moreover, a *feeling community*. Extreme Metal offers my respondents distinct *feeling structures* through which they construct their affective experience. A *feeling community*, I have illustrated, is produced from *love's labours*, due to feeling providing the drive to work, invest, learn and perform and to identify and unify as members of the Extreme Metal subculture. That consequently, it is feeling that provides the explanatory drive to embed oneself in and take on a subcultural identity.

<u>Conclusion</u>

This thesis has investigated my respondents' Extreme Metal fandom and, in so doing, has interrogated the nature of subcultural investments, attachments and identification amongst a group of Extreme Metal fans. It has sought to introduce a revised approach to subcultural theory that considers subculture as *performative feeling community*. It furthermore, has introduced a focus upon music genre fandom and made a valuable contribution to the field of Metal studies. In this conclusive chapter, I draw together the themes of my analysis with the aim of clarifying the thesis arguments. In addition, I outline the contribution of the thesis to academic knowledge, the methodological insights gained and the future directions and possibilities the research has opened up. I begin with an overview of the main arguments put forward in this thesis and the substance of what my analysis has uncovered.

<u>Summary of the Empirical Analysis</u>

At the outset of the thesis, I presented a number of central questions that I would address. To summarise, these focused on ascertaining what the characteristics, values and rituals of Extreme Metal subculture were for my respondents; what their attachments and investments were; how my respondents participated in creating, performing and sustaining subcultural identity; and how their relationship with music (in this case Extreme Metal) impacted upon such participation. The thesis has successfully responded to those questions and represented what Extreme Metal subculture entailed for

my respondents. In Chapter 5, I highlighted my respondents' common forms of identity work that characterised their *Extreme Habitus*. This was typified in the respondents' subcultural capitals related to knowledge, style and subcultural activity, their values of shared connoisseurship and a common work ethic and in their distinctions of taste. Chapter 6 illustrated that my respondents' habitus was acquired and adopted through the process of *legitimate peripheral participation,* which involved labouring in becoming, learning and defending an identity. In Chapter 7, this habitus was also shown to extend to the common speech, narrative repertoires and performative practices in respondent interactions, which highlighted that my respondents were active in creating the subcultural world that they felt part of. I argued in Chapter 8, that my respondents' taste and habitus and hence authenticities and kinship were created through shared attachments to the *feeling structures* of Extreme Metal music and, therefore, Extreme Metal subculture could be identified as a *performative feeling community.*

Key Themes of the Empirical Analysis

There are several interlinking themes that have emerged from my analysis. These can be broadly categorized as: learning and labouring; authenticity and hierarchy; interacting and performing; feeling; and extremity. Each of these characterise my respondents' experience of Extreme Metal subculture and may give greater insight into collective identifications and contribute to understandings of subculture, Extreme Metal, and music genre fandom.

<u>*Learning and Labouring*</u>

Throughout the empirical analysis of this thesis, I have demonstrated that my respondents were taking part in labours linked to their subcultural participation. I argued that the research group had a strong work ethic, which underpinned their habitus. The shared values related to subcultural labours highlighted that work was as important as the capital strived for; it further conveyed authentic and committed fandom. There was a fear of losing labour (and hence subcultural identity and status), and as a result, my respondents took part in *labours of defence*. I have additionally argued that my respondents had a *love* of labour because pleasure was derived in performing mundane subcultural activities and 'putting the effort in', in order to experience collective feeling. Linked to my respondents' labours, was the process of 'learning' and thus becoming a member of the Extreme Metal subculture. I have, however, shown that the process of learning was also a narrative repertoire (a 'developmental narrative') used collectively by my respondents to create a coherent tale of becoming an Extreme Metal fan and possessing a stable identity. Learning and labouring were key practices of Extreme Metal subculture for my respondents, which forged notions of investment and commitment in a collective identity.

<u>*Authenticity and Hierarchy*</u>

The analysis chapters have highlighted that my respondents appeared to remain committed and invested in Extreme Metal subculture. Their participation in a *learning culture* was based on the hierarchy between the newcomer and the old-timer. A collective sense of hierarchy was also shown through my

respondents' common forms of identity work that characterised their *extreme habitus*. This habitus was illustrated in their subcultural capitals; their values of shared connoisseurship and a common work ethic; and in their distinctions of taste particularly against an imagined 'other', which served to create collective identification. Identifying a figure of threat such as the 'scenester', defined the collective through identifying what it was not. My respondents were investing in notions of Extreme Metal authenticity, which were achieved through subcultural participation involving both identity-work and boundary-work. Ideas about authenticity and hierarchy, therefore, created the sense of being members of the subculture and influenced experiences and interactions within it.

Interacting and Performing

I have identified the research group's participation in performing Extreme Metal identity throughout the analysis. This was demonstrated in my respondents' subcultural capital seen in their style, knowledge and subcultural activity; their accounts of style's semaphoric value; through their managing/concealing of Extreme Metal identity outside the subculture; and their management of behaviours inside the subculture, such as their controlling of personal physical practice. The importance of performance has also been seen in the research group members' descriptions of past experiences of 'passing' and 'faking' Extreme Metal identity. Furthermore, performing has been related to the shared speech, narrative repertoires and performative practices of my respondents that enacted collective identity. The importance of

performance demonstrates the interactive process of collective identity. Shared

speech narratives and performances rely on the presence of an addressee. I

demonstrated in Chapter 7, that through their interactions and the narrating of a

structured biography, my respondents were taking part in creating subcultural

identity. The value of the ritual work described in Chapters 5 and 6 of

performing habitus and labouring/learning to gain subcultural capital,

depended upon its recognition by others, which made one's labours

worthwhile. In Chapter 8, I illustrated that interactions were also key to the

construction of *feeling community*, for instance the live event provided the

sense of being in a feeling community because one perceives one has the same

physical and emotional feelings as every other member of the audience.

Extreme Metal subculture, therefore, existed in the interaction of its members.

Feeling

In this thesis, music has been shown to provide a distinct relationship with

feeling. Research group discussion illustrated that music could be used for

transferring feeling, managing feeling and providing a language of feeling.

Extreme Metal music offered my respondents distinct *feeling structures*. These

feeling structures of the music genre were linked to the habitus and

distinctions; rules; performative labours; interpersonal relations and thus

collective kinship and identities that my respondents, as fans, adopted. Music

has been linked with *love* (as a feeling structure). Love expressed my

respondents' deep investments and attachments with Extreme Metal music and

their commitment to the relationship. Feeling, therefore, provided the drive for

my respondents to invest in the collective identity of Extreme Metal subculture.

Extremity

In chapter 1, I highlighted that a central generic characteristic of Extreme Metal, as a genre, was its pursuit of dissonance/extremity in music. 'Extremity' was utilised by my respondents to place the Extreme Metal fan as 'elite'. Much like a 'cult fan', they positioned themselves as individual and 'non-mainstream' through their fandom of music that was perceived as different (even non-music). This was shown to highlight the research group's connoisseurship. The emphasis upon intelligence, and distanced judgment justified Extreme Metal's extreme content as art, and hence gave it cultural legitimacy. Moreover, in a popular music subculture associated with profane imagery, it demonstrated the blurring between 'high' and 'low' culture within popular culture. Extremity was a key experience in my respondents' fandom of the music genre. Due to the dissonant nature of the music genre, they described a process of *learning to listen* in which they 'eased themselves' into the music genre sounds. Extreme Metal offered my respondents an encounter with *extreme feeling*. This was physically experienced at gigs and was described through the romance language of power and love. Extremity was not only present in music. I have also illustrated my respondents' shared speech and genre practices that highlight the ways in which extremity of content is justified and made part of the performative community. Extremity, therefore,

featured as a form of performative practice and feeling structure which characterised the collective experience of Extreme Metal.

Contribution to Knowledge

The themes that have emerged from my empirical analysis, alongside my theoretical approach, have made substantive contributions to knowledge in the fields of subculture, Metal studies and fan studies as well as contributing to larger questions relating to individual and collective identity and late-modern times.

The Field of Subcultural Studies

My research develops subcultural theory through introducing the distinct relationship the subculturalist has with music. Feeling is identified as a key feature of music subculture: it provides the drive to take on and embed oneself in subcultural identity. I have argued, in Chapter 3, that post-subcultural studies' preoccupation with temporality and fluid memberships and their emphasis on individual play, fail to consider that many people continue to form committed and invested relationships with distinctive collectives that can still be identified as subcultures. I have argued that the concept of subculture still has value to apply to specific music cultures that display distinctiveness, shared values, practices, a sense of collective identity, and a notion of hierarchy. The thesis suggests that subculture should be considered in relation to the interactive nature of identity, and the distinctive forms of subcultural habitus and expert labours linked to music culture practices. I have used an innovative

approach to re-theorise subculture for late-modern times as *performative feeling community*. Drawing from Bakhtin (1981; 1986) I have assumed that social identities (both individual and collective) are relational and struggled over, and conceptualised through language and interaction. Yet, I have also been able to show how my respondents structure their identities and create a sense of authenticity, hierarchy and difference via an appropriation of Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of habitus, capital, and distinction; and in process, through applying my respondents' activities to Lave and Wenger's (1991) 'legitimate peripheral participation'. Moreover, the research has addressed subcultural theory through recuperating a subcultural framework via feeling. Drawing on Brennan's (2003) notion of *structures of feeling*, I have interrogated the distinct relationship between music, feeling and collective identification. Through focusing upon the everyday processes, practices and interactions of my respondents, I have identified feeling as a key element of subcultural investment, attachment and commitment and collective identification.

Similarities can be drawn between my analysis of the research group's accounts of Extreme Metal subculture and other significant music cultures that have previously been researched. Noteworthy comparisons can be drawn with Thornton's (1995) *club culture*. My respondents' notion of being part of a secret society, the value placed on hipness and being 'underground' all have resonances with Thornton's work in which she describes clubbers making distinctions between mainstream and underground and insider and outsider.

The study also shares similarities with the studies that have adopted aspects of Thornton's work to research music cultures, including Kahn-Harris' (2007) consideration of Extreme Metal subcultural capitals and Hodkinson's (2002) description of Goths' insider/outsider distinctions. Another study with key points of commonality with this thesis is Malbon's (1999) account of the affective experience of clubbing. His participants' accounts of affective feeling that describe the loss of self into music and music's energy giving properties can be compared to my respondents' descriptions of power. Where my research differs, is that it is not predominantly dance and drugs that create an affective experience for my respondents; rather it is the distinct relationship with Extreme Metal music that is central to my respondents' experiences of subculture.

The Field of Metal Studies

This thesis has also made a key contribution to the field of Metal studies. I have illustrated that Metal culture can be considered in relation to subculture and in relation to the auditory experience. Although differing from Heavy Metal in terms of audience and mainstream appeal, I have highlighted particular similarities that can be drawn between Heavy Metal and Extreme Metal subculture. This can be seen in the display of subcultural capitals via the band T-shirt, seen in Brown's (2007) study, and an emphasis on the musical virtuosity of musicians, as highlighted by Walser (1993). It further extends a discussion of the emotional appeal of Metal that Weinstein (2000) began in her discussion of the experience of live Metal concerts. The thesis contributes

substantively to existing Extreme Metal studies. Purcell (2004) pointed to the difference in commitment and investment of Death Metal fans. This has been further considered via my examination of the learning culture of Extreme Metal in which there is a movement of participants with differing levels of experience, knowledge and activity. This research has served to reinforce and expand Kahn-Harris' (2004; 2007) research on Extreme Metal. I have similarly argued that the culture surrounding Extreme Metal is characterised by collective values and activities that are in certain respects experienced mundanely in everyday life through labouring. I have described my respondents' notions of subcultural capitals that are also comparable to Kahn-Harris' (2007) linking of subcultural capitals to knowledge, the record collection, and work. I have, however, offered further investigation into the process of subcultural membership, interactions and attachments in Extreme Metal subculture, and have given consideration to the affective experience of Extreme Metal music and subculture, that is also linked to the experience of extremity. I have illustrated that Extreme Metal music subculture has a specific character characterised by distinctive forms of subcultural habitus, expert labours, performative practices and feeling.

This thesis also has contributed to identifying what is distinctive about Extreme Metal. I have demonstrated Extreme Metal is distinct as a music genre that is in constant development and in search of dissonance and extremes in music. Extreme Metal is distinct as a music subculture in relation to members' habitus, performances and the nature of the fan relationship with the music

genre. In addition, it is distinct as a set of feeling structures. As a music genre, Extreme Metal offers my respondents the experience of 'extreme feeling', which appears unlike accounts of other music genres and subcultures.

The Fields of Fandom Studies and Music Studies

This thesis has contributed to the field of fandom by giving greater attention to the relationship with, and attachments people have, to music. Music fandom is not only based on the celebration of the music artist. I have suggested that a consideration of the character of music genre and the everyday relationships and attachments fans have with music, may offer further insight into music fandom. The empirical analysis has shown that music can be considered as habitus and distinction, feeling structure, rule-governed space and as a site for deep knowledges. Respondent accounts have clearly highlighted how music can be related to the labours of identity and community, and that music genres have distinct feeling structures and modes of investment and attachment related to the listening experience of the fan.

The thesis also contributes to wider questions surrounding the nature of music and our relationship with it. I have investigated my respondents' practices, responses and feelings linked to listening to Extreme Metal music and have illustrated that music was used to transfer, manage and express feeling. This study has given insight into why music is placed as an important object in many people's lives. It suggests that music is more than an object. People may unite around music because it can offer a unique personal experience and

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affect. It may give pleasure, offer escape or relief, produce and transfer feeling, give bodily sensation, or promote thought and understanding. This research, therefore, leads to further questions about the power of music and its place in everyday life.

Individual and Collective Identities

This study of Extreme Metal fans has revealed particular features of individual and collective identities and forms of solidarity in late-modern societies. One can consider that in late-modernity people continue to follow the modern project of self-identity, and participate in various attempts to reflexively construct the 'self'. I have illustrated that people still form meaningful attachments to collective identities. These individual and collective identities exist in interaction. For instance, my respondents created coherent individual and subcultural identities through the telling of stories about themselves; through placing emphasis on commitment and longevity; and through interactive practices. The thesis has also shown that people may identify collectively through experiencing and recognising collective feeling. My respondents emphasised the importance of feelings in their experience of Extreme Metal and in their relationship with other fans. It suggests that by seeing that their feelings are reflected in others their attachments are made meaningful. This indicates that people may seek emotional/feeling communities in their desire for recognition and to reinforce their sense of 'self'.

Cultural Extremity

In Chapter 1, I highlighted that Extreme Metal had generic characteristics linked to extremity. I argued that while it was a possible site for the wider cultural elaboration of extremity, it also appeared to be faced with problems retaining its perceived extremity and remaining counter-culture because wider culture had shifted towards extremity. This study has given insight into the wider implications of inhabiting an 'extreme' cultural position in societies in which there has been a routinisation of the extreme in popular culture. Whilst the extreme appeared a significant trait of Extreme Metal music, my respondents appeared to be creating distance between their subculture and wider popular culture. My respondents attempted to place Extreme Metal in the realms of 'high' culture via their connoisseur values. In so doing, extremity was legitimated and separated from the wider cultural democratisation of extremity. Additionally, my respondents took part in Extreme Metal genre taxonomisation that focused upon repetition of genre traits rather than extremity. This may be due to the fact that the subculture has to continually reinvent what is important and valued, as wider culture changes around it.

Although Extreme Metal may be deemed extreme in relation to its content and imagery, the study also indicates that my respondents' choices to embed themselves in such extremities is due to Extreme Metal providing a particular set/structure of feelings that are related to 'extreme feeling.' Inhabiting the 'extreme' in culture may, therefore, be due to a desire for intense modes of

emotion or arousal. Moreover, the affective experiences of Extreme Metal may further indicate a wider movement to collectively identify with affective sociality in late-modern times.

Methodological Contribution

This thesis has contributed an innovative methodological approach to qualitative researching. The research data produced through undertaking this thesis demonstrates the successful use of combined qualitative methods and group research in obtaining thick and rich descriptions and breadth of detail of my respondents' Extreme Metal fandom and subcultural participation. I have demonstrated that conducting recurring group research with the same respondents may offer greater insight into respondents' lives. It also allows respondents to become invested and develop their own thoughts and line of enquiry over the research period. Such a methodological approach is, therefore, suited to researching areas in which one wishes to uncover group opinion and collective-speak, such as youth cultures, music subcultures, and political groupings. Combining methods within the research group interview, offered differing forms of data. Each method was adopted to elicit response, and each method proved successful in obtaining different forms of data. In particular, utilising the method of 'music elicitation' opened up group conversation on feelings, related to people's relationship with music, that I feel I would not have achieved in any other way. As my analysis has shown, feelings are difficult to place into language; yet, this method created a realm in which expression was made easier due to the medium being both an aid and a focus.

Further Research

I have argued that feelings provided the explanatory drive for my respondents to embed themselves in Extreme Metal music subculture. This was only a small sample study and, therefore, it is of great interest to discover whether my findings are universally applicable to Extreme Metal fans. In turn, this poses the question of whether other music genre fans display similar attachments and investments. If undertaking research on music genre fandom, one could consider what the feeling structures of other music genres are. Do other Metal fandoms have similar structures of feeling? What are the feeling structures of a music genre that is perceived far removed from Extreme Metal? For example, what would a Jazz fan perceive the feeling structures of Jazz to be? Are there any similarities between music genres and their structures of feeling?

Furthermore, this study presents several questions in relation to researching other music fans and subcultures. For example, are the narrative repertoires of my respondents, shared by other Extreme Metal fans, and other music subcultures? How are love and work tied into other music fandoms/subcultures? Can the process of 'legitimate peripheral participation' or 'labouring to learn' be applied to other fan/subcultural memberships?

The research approach can be further expanded into areas outside studies of music subcultures and fandoms. It points to the processes through which collective identities are formed, performed and sustained and examines the

drive (investments and attachments) that makes people want to take on collective identity and feel part of a collective. Will other collective formations, therefore, pose similarities to this study? Furthermore, as I have highlighted above, the research points to a consideration of bigger questions which relate to the nature of individual and collective identities in late-modern time, the consequence of inhabiting an extreme position as wider culture moves towards extremities, and the importance of feeling communities.

Personal Change

I began this thesis with a reflection of how music fitted in my biography and, in so doing, began an examination of my own fandom and investment in Extreme Metal. When I began this research, I had felt that examining those in a subculture in which I was involved would be a great advantage, and in many ways, my identity as 'insider researcher' gave me access, and helped establish trust and rapport with my respondents. On the other hand, through being so close to the research focus, my life came under self-scrutiny. In effect, my intellectual journey, through completion of this thesis, has involved self-discovery. The analysis of the data, including my stories and opinions, led to realising something more of my own participation in collective speech and narrative repertoires and distinctions of taste. I have in many respects, been theorizing a relationship and process that I myself have experienced as Extreme Metal fan and subcultural participant. I have seen my life-experiences and attachments reflected by the respondents in the research group and, in effect, realised the collective nature of aspects of my life that have before

seemed personal and individual. At the end of this research, I am left with the

satisfaction of having made friendships with my respondents and having

developed a deeper understanding of my own investments and participation in

the Extreme Metal subculture. I continue to invest in Extreme Metal, take part

in love's labours, and feel its collective kinship.

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<u>Appendices</u>

<u>Appendix A: First Contact</u>

Email via 'Myspace Message':

EXTREME METAL RESEARCH!

Hi, I hope you don't mind me contacting you, I'm aware of your club night and thought you might be able to help me.

I am currently looking for Extreme Metallers to take part in my PhD research project. I am looking for Extreme Metal fans to take part in a discussion group which will take place once a month. The group aims to discuss changes in Extreme metal (music and scene), the media, our autobiographies in relation to music and the importance of music in our everyday lives.

If you would like to participate, want more information, or know anyone who would, can you please contact me via Myspace or email: [address]

Nik

Appendix B: The Research Group Members

Nicola Allett: I was 25 at the start of the meetings. Female. University educated. I have been an Extreme Metal fan since I was 18. I play bass guitar. My favourite Extreme Metal genre is Black Metal, but I also listen to Doom Metal and Death Metal.

Ben: 23 year old male. At the time of the research, he was in his last year of university, studying philosophy. He has now joined the police force. He listened to all of the Extreme Metal genres, but Black Metal in particular. He helped organise and run a local Extreme Metal club night. He also played guitar in an Extreme Metal band with Rob.

Chloe: 28 year old female. University educated. She has an administration job in the NHS. She listens to Grindcore, Death Metal and Hardcore Metal but hates Black Metal. She organises a local Extreme Metal club night and lives with her partner, Liam.

Liam: 31 year old male. Works in IT. He organises a local Extreme Metal club night and lives with his partner Chloe. He has been a fan of Grindcore and Death Metal since his mid teens.

Jack: 27 year old male. Warehouse supervisor. A fan of Black Metal and Death Metal. Lives in a Midlands town some distance away from the city; but attends the Extreme Metal night many of the members of the group organise, and this was how he became friends with Liam, Chloe and Ben.

Nathan: 19 year old male. In his first year of university and studying chemistry. He listens mainly to Black Metal, and has been a fan since he was 16. Some of his first experiences of live Extreme Metal were at the Extreme Metal night which some of the group members organise (and which he still regularly attends).

Rob: 24 year old male. University educated. His favourite music genres are Grindcore, Death Metal, and Industrial. He is a drummer in an Extreme Metal band with Ben. He only attended one group session due to a change in employment.

Appendix C: The Research Group Meetings

Group 1 – General discussion about experiences of Extreme Metal

Themes: stereotypes, tastes, biography.

Group 2 – Becoming and being a fan/scene member.

Memory story: 'remember a time when you felt love for music'.

Group 3 – The live event

Memory story: 'remember a physical response to a live event'.

Group 4 – Extreme Metal media

Memory story: 'remember one of your first encounters with Extreme Metal in

the media'.

Media Elicitation: Group members bought in pieces of Extreme Metal media

(magazines/fanzines/articles) they liked and disliked.

Group 5 - Style

Memory story: 'remember a moment when style/image was important to you'.

Group 6 – The collective – How do my respondents identify the subculture

they feel part of?

Group 7 – Music preferences and attachments

Music Elicitation: Research group members played a piece of music they loved.

Group 8 – Music and feeling

Music Elicitation: Research group members played a piece of music that they associated with 'emotion'.

Group 9 – Extremity and the future of Extreme Metal

Group 10 – General chat and loose ends.

Appendix D: Music Elicitation Discography

Here is a comprehensive list of the tracks the research group listened to, in the music elicitation section of the group interviews:

Darkthrone. 'En as I Dype Skogen' on <u>Transylvanian Hunger</u> © 1994. Peacevile Records.

Ensiferum, 'LAI, LAI, HEI' on <u>Iron</u> © 2004. Spinefarm.

Eyehategod. 'Take as Needed for Pain' on <u>Take as Needed for Pain</u> © 1993. Century Media.

Frightmare. 'Angela' on <u>Bringing Back the Bloodshed</u> © 2006. Razorback Records.

Hypocrisy. 'Fractured Millenium' on <u>Hypocrisy</u> © 1999. Nuclear Blast.

Mayhem. 'In the lies where upon you lay' on <u>Grand Declaration of War</u> © 2000. Season of Mist/ Necropolis Records.

Nachtfalke. 'Valhalla' on <u>Doomed to Die</u> © 2002. CHP.

Obituary, 'The End Complete', <u>The End Complete</u> © 1992. Roadrunner Records.

Shining, 'Och Med Insikt Skall Du Forga', <u>IV The Eerie Cold</u> © 2005. Avantgarde Music.