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Metal/Emo Music and Their Effect on Millennials in the United States

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Masters in Ethnomusicology

by

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to understand the relationship between two related genres and a generation. Both genres have different interpretations, some catharsis, and others self-destruction. Finding modern and historical evidence of a need for sad music revealed a need for music that empathizes with a person's current state. These genres did have the potential to engage in self-destruction, however, it was found this was due to external factors far more than the cause itself. When music is involved in destructive behavior it gives the individual permission to do so, rather than be the motivator towards it. As art was rarely the driving factor, the evidence that lives could be helped or invited to violence, research was required to understand this relationship. Interviews were conducted with four individuals who fit the criteria necessary to give data that applied to the demographic of millennials from the United States. It was found that findings based around the music being largely beneficial with exceptions only extending to unique or extreme circumstances gave credibility to prior findings. To best understand then where these extreme circumstances could potentially change the impact of music from positive to negative a chart was drawn and created to give a numerical template. Giving individuals deeper understanding of musics ability to help them, and what to look for in media that may permit destructive acts.

Keywords - Metal, emo, millennials, music, mental health

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To Jeremy Gurley, Sean Cunningham, and Jude Dutton

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Chapter One: Emo and Metal Introduction

Introduction

Emo and Metal and their Impact

During the first decade of the twenty-first century, emo and metal music surged in popularity among millennials. Both genres focus on expressing the feelings of middle-class Caucasian Americans. Frequently, metal and emo music contains examples of individuals participating in acts of harming others and themselves. Each genre functions on a spectrum within the umbrella of rock music. Metal casts a large umbrella as a rock sub-genre, while emo participates throughout the spectrum of pop-punk into various hardcore styles of metal. Although often exclusive, during this time both genres would periodically operate within similar spheres of one another. Defenders of these genres highlight the music's ability to help with mental health. Thus, a dichotomy emerges in the discourse surrounding emo and metal concerning whether responses to these genres tend toward self-harm versus emotional catharsis.

Statement of the Problem

These genres and their effects remain relatively undocumented. Documentation does exist but is relatively small when compared to other genres, notably classic rock-n-roll from the eras of Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley, jazz, and Western Classical music. Among these genres there exist vast amounts of research, and scholarly attention, both historical and theoretical. For this reason, emo and metal and their impact should be studied and preserved.

Significance of the Project

It is intended that this project will elaborate on both the negatives and positives of this music and its effect on millennials in America. The ideal outcome of the project will be to identify and question stereotypes of the culture of metal and emo music. Self-harm and misogyny are often negative stereotypes associated with both genres. In contrast, it also provides a place of musical safety for others.

Douglas Daschuk conveys that self-harm is, "lurking within 'the deepest levels of the emo lifestyle."[1] This quotation precedes a description of a filmed interview that Daschuk conducted. During this interview, the article describes the cuts and self-inflicted injuries of the young individual he is interviewing. Regarding misogyny, Sam de Boise argues that emo is simply a different take on misogyny and "foregrounds competition for female affection, and more importantly, possession as a means of asserting moral superiority over other men."[2] These negative effects of the music and its culture will be discussed further in Chapter Two. Contrasting these criticisms, the authors of "Who Enjoys Listening to Sad Music and Why?" state, "although people avoid experiencing negative emotions in their daily lives, many people get enormous enjoyment from sad music."[3] This should also help those wanting to know more about the psychological effect of these genres and music.

Both the age of millennials as well as the genres' impact on them form the need for this study which will work to understand metal/emo music and culture in the United States and document it for future investigations. As a more recent piece of musical culture, there exists a

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[1] Douglas M. Daschuk, "Messageboard Confessional: Online Discourse and the Production of the "Emo Kid", *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 54, (201): 101.

[2] Sam de Boise, "Cheer up emo kid rethinking the 'crisis of masculinity' in emo," *Popular Music*, 33, no 2, 2(014): 237.

[3] Jonna K. Vuoskoski, William F. Thompson, Doris McIlwain, and Tuomas Eerola. "Who Enjoys Listening to Sad Music and Why?" *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (2012): 311.

smaller amount of documentation, research, and understanding of the music and its cultural effects, and the musical following that listened to them during their formative years are now young adults. However, the cultural impacts of these genres persist to this day. Thus, such as study is expected to help both in understanding these genres and their effects beyond the stereotypes associated with them.

Research Questions

Various questions will guide this study: first, finding the impact of emo/metal music on the millennial generation in the United States. This is likely answerable through new research relevant to the millennial generation concerning the impact of emo and metal during 2000-2010 and beyond. Second, research will involve discovering the relationship between emo/metal and self-harm. Self-harm can be understood as a singular phenomenon with two separate categories: (1) the act of cutting to achieve a rush or to produce scars; and (2) more severe suicide. Lastly, this study will pursue whether or not these sentiments carry over from individuals that were mostly adolescents into young adulthood. It is not unusual to retain behaviors, ideals, and sentiments from childhood to adulthood. As such, there are likely long-term results of emo/metal music. Further finding the effects of emo and metal as a means of catharsis and violence.

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis is that emo music does carry with it a culture of self-harm. Emotional expression without restraint, while highly productive, can lead to potential self-harm. As mentioned above, this primarily comes in two forms horizontal cutting across the arm and suicide. In the latter case, perhaps not every instance was caused by a premeditated intention to commit suicide. Rather, it may be unintentionally caused by a desire for release through violent self-expression, one tied to the culture of this music.

The second hypothesis is that emo and metal allow for healthy emotional release, often giving an outlet that may not otherwise exist in a societally acceptable way. In this way, it is expected that positive effects of emo music will be found.

The final hypothesis is that the benefits of emo music outweigh the negatives. If this proves true, this should inform the way these negative aspects should be discussed. Evaluating and discussing the harmful effects of the genre and culture should help establish a means to circumvent or at least understand them. Acknowledgment and prioritization of positive outcomes may enhance their effects.

Definition of Terms

When defining metal and emo, Adam Mayer, and Jeffery Timberlake state that "heavy metal emerged in the 1970s from the blues and hard rock but, especially 1980s, has become sonically and aesthetically far removed from the pop."[4] Regarding emo Sam De Boise states:

> "American hardcore, taking inspiration from British punk, was a reaction to the economic and political conditions of the Reagan/Thatcher era in which many disenfranchised young people found themselves at odds with the perceived political establishment. It emerged from the American suburbs, areas of varying white middle-class affluence, and articulated an aggressive opposition to the middle-class conservatism of the parent generation, both lyrically and sonically."[5]

Although emo is separate from metal, they are commonly associated with one another. An example of this can be found by Daschuk in his article *Messageboard Confessional.* He discusses the metal band Atreyu with the emo band My Chemical Romance as though they are

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[4] Mayer, A. and J. M. Timberlake, "'The Fist in the Face of God': Heavy Metal Music and Decentralized Cultural Diffusion," *Sociological Perspectives* 27 (2014): 27-51.

[5] Sam de Boise, "Cheer up emo kid: rethinking the 'crisis of masculinity' in emo," *Popular Music* 33 (2014) 225-242.

synonymous. This is refuted by Atreyu's front man, who states in an interview with Scott Munro with Metal Hammer on October 16, 2018, "that they not only are metalcore but believe that they made metalcore."[6] This signifies a murky coexistence between metal and emo. A more accurate conclusion is that their cultures often overlap, sharing elements and not functioning autonomously from one another.

This study will be operating with the definitions of positive and negative as laid out in *Biases in the use of positive and negative words across twenty natural languages*. The authors state that they, "searched for frequency of English usage for the seven adjectives we examined across languages in the first part of the present study and their opposites (opposites listed after the solidus: pleasant/aversive, sad/happy, dirty/clean, bad/good, sincere/no obvious opposite in English, pure/contaminated, beautiful/ugly)."[7] The study proceeds to then establish the use cases as stated either positive or negative. As such it is these adjectives that will be used as positive or negative.

Glossary of Terms

Alternative music – "Music that may be defined in opposition to other musics."[8]

Emo – A music that "articulated an aggressive opposition to the middle-class conservatism of the parent generation, both lyrically and sonically."[9]

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[6] Scott Munro, *Atreyu: We Invented Metalcore,* October 16 ed. Metal Hammer, Louder Sound, 2018.

[7] Rozin, Paul, Loren Berman, and Edward Royzman, "Biases in use of positive and negative words across," *Psychology Press*, 2009: 538.

[8] Robynn J. Stilwell, *Alternative Music*. Grove Music Online, 2001, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40609, (accessed March 13, 2022)

[9] de Boise, "Cheer up emo kid: rethinking the 'crisis of masculinity' in emo." 225-242.

Metal - Metal music was defined "by distorted guitar 'power chords', heavy riffs, wailing vocals, and virtuosic solos by guitarists and drummers."[10]

Misogyny – "Hatred of, aversion to, or prejudice against women."[11]

Popular music – Is "a socio-musical space always in some sense subaltern, but with contents that are contested and subject to historical mutation."[12]

Rock – "Tends to be highly amplified, with a strong beat and rhythmic patterns commonly considered erotic, and to draw heavily on proto-folk (especially African American) musical sources from Southern USA."[13]

Self-harm – Is the "act of purposely hurting oneself (as by cutting or burning the skin) as an emotional coping mechanism."[14]

Research Plan

One of the limitations of the study is the period of the music and its primary demographic. Metal and emo music are both related and track back several decades. However, to begin with, their origin, evolutions, and influences would widen the scope further than desired. Secondly, this study is limited to the United States as the music during this time and region is largely a reflection of the culture in which it existed. Finally, the study will be limited to

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[10] Robert Walser, *Grove Music Online,* "Heavy Metal," January 20, 2001, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.49140 (accessed March 13, 2022).

[11] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary,* s.v. "Misogyny," accessed February 21, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/misogyny.

[12] Richard Middleton, and Peter Manuel, *"Popular Music," Grove Music Online,* January 20, 2001, https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.43179 (accessed March 13, 2022).

[13] Richard Middleton. *Grove Music Online,* Krautrock, January 20, 2001. https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.49687 (accessed March 13, 2022).

[14] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary,* s.v. "Self-Harm" 1983, accessed March 13, 2022 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self-harm.

documented research, studies, articles, and interviews. Mostly, this will be based on cumulating

research to serve the purpose of control. This will be achieved in Chapter Two. The purpose of

the project is to compile documentation, interviews, and data to deduce the effect(s) of the two

sub-genres of rock and evaluate their impact on emotions. Further, interviews of millennials that

had direct interaction with metal/emo culture and mental health professionals will be combined

with existing data.

One concern for interviews, given that this will be a reflective study, is that controlling

variables will be difficult. The means of study will be what Margaret LeCompte calls a

"Controlled Field Study."[15] This is necessary as LeCompte states, "true control groups often

cannot be created. Further, differences among experimental subjects (or among) treatment

administration(s) can lead to differences not legitimately produced by the intervention."[16] This is

necessary as the research is reflective. Surveys will not be added since according to LeCompte,

"another limitation of surveys is that they assess only what people think, know, or report that

they do at a specific point in time."[17] Interviews will specifically address how the participants felt

in response to the music at the time, how they feel it impacted their lives, whether they feel it

was beneficial, and how they fell into the stereotypes of the culture.

Summary

The project will focus on the culture most impacted by metal and emo music which

embraces violent and vulgar interpretations of life, empowering negative emotions, or conversely

serving as a form of catharsis. It will also research the nature of emotional management. This

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[15] Margaret D. LeCompte, and Jean J. Schensul. *Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research: An Introduction.* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010), 107.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 100.

will involve questioning emo and metal's impact at the time and the continuation of that impact.

The findings of these two separate genres and the cultural concerns and crossovers between the

two genres will emerge through literature and interview-based research, understanding that each

genre feeds into both positive and negative stereotypes. Finally, the project will work to maintain

a continuous record documenting these genres.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Music is an element of Western European and American life that has been prominent throughout history. Whether for dancing, mourning, or simply playing in the background, it is a staple of much of Western culture. In this way, it serves to influence or resonate with human emotions. Due to this phenomenon, one may observe that an individual, when in a melancholic mood, will be more likely to listen to a Chopin Nocturne over a Waltz. As stated in the paper "Who Enjoys Listening to Sad Music and Why," the authors argue that "many people get enormous enjoyment from sad music such as Greensleeves or a Chopin nocturne."[18] Examples of empathetic, tragic, or sorrowful pieces serve as a vice for a melancholic state and make it relatable.

Coexisting with empathy, music also serves as an influence on its participants. A person may listen to music they find motivating when engaging in an activity that requires focus and energy. If a task creates a sense of anxiety, a style that is calm and relaxing may be used to alleviate excessive stress. Therefore, music emblematic of a culture of self-harm could push an individual to participate in these acts.

Music frequently mirrors an emotional state. As previously mentioned, people find enjoyment in sad music. This gives cause for music containing darker themes. Engaging in a medium that is not relatable carries less impact. Therefore, musical selection is likely to be similar to an emotion or state held by the listener. Based on a study conducted by Husain, Thompson, and Schellenberg, the mental stimulus is most effective through a media of preference. In further detail, Husain, Thompson, and Schellenberg state:

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[18] Vuoskoski, et al, ":Who Enjoys Listening to Sad Music and Why," 31.

"Participants performed a spatial task after listening to a Mozart sonata or a narrated story. After participating in both conditions, they were asked to indicate which stimulus (Mozart or story) they preferred. Participants who preferred the story performed better on a spatial test after hearing the story, whereas participants who preferred Mozart performed better after hearing Mozart."[19]

Building upon the concept of one's relation to music expands beyond Western Classical music. A song such as "Down with the Sickness" by Disturbed focuses on dark and morbid content. As previously mentioned, the individual that resonates with this music most would be in a similar mental and emotional state as the music being listened to and enjoy its aggressive tone. In contrast, "Sadie Hawkins Dance" by Relient K, which is about the drama before a high school dance, is more relatable for someone navigating the social life of high school. Focusing on emo and metal as a subculture, these genres constitute the margins of popular culture and society. Thus, these genres draw individuals that feel they are outcasts from popular society. These emotions may become amplified by lyrics that relate to the listener's life experiences, creating either an empathic response or empowering negative emotions, such as feelings of isolation.

To give social context, during the decade of 2000-2010, emo and metal music experienced a resurgence from its birth in the 1980s in the United Kingdom. To limit the scope of this research, the demographic focus will center on the United States. Although metal and emo would expand due to the internet, they also rose in the United States in popularity due to feelings of isolation for many middle-class white Americans. While social isolation is not a new part of the human experience or condition, this music became a modern coping mechanism. Emo and metal evolved out of earlier genres such as grunge, prior generations of metal, and punk rock to relate to a new generation's sense of isolation.

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[19] Ibid.

Historically, this was a time when some teenage listeners saw family and friends go to the Middle East in the conflicts that resulted from the 9/11 tragedy. Even those not directly affected by war watched the nation that had experienced stability for over a decade become involved in lengthy, costly overseas conflicts. Feelings of isolation were matched and expressed by artists of the time. Examples such as "Wake Me Up, When September Ends" by Green Day spoke specifically about the tragedies of 9/11. Avenged Sevenfold wrote the song M.I.A. speaking towards those returning from war. This caused metal and emo to provide musical subcultures that offered a sense of belonging to the isolated individual.

With the two genres introduced, this chapter will examine both, following the six standard questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? These questions speak to important concerns of demographics, culture, what was happening, where it was happening, why it was happening, and how. After this fundamental data, the following elements will be investigated: concerns, relationships, stereotypes, and healthy responses to metal/emo. These will function as secondary layers of investigation. After establishing this basis for metal and emo, it becomes clear why this music affected adolescents during the early 2000s.

<div align="center">Emo and Metal</div>

Both musicians and listeners discussed adolescence or early adulthood during the early 2000s. To support the study of this age range according to Saarikallio, "The age-related results from the current samples preliminarily indicate an increase of music-related mood regulation during adolescence while differences during young adulthood appear smaller,"[20] meaning that music has the greatest impact during adolescence for mood management, and a lesser impact

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[20] Suvi Saarikallio, "Development and Validation of the Brief Music in Mood Regulation Scale (B-MMR)." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, (2012): 102.

towards mood as individuals enter adulthood.[21] If music is more impactful on adolescents, and if

it is impactful on mood, it stands to reason that it is more impactful on the mood of adolescents.

By this logic, it is also less influential for young adults than adolescents that wrote or listened to

it. As such, it is also less likely to contribute positively or negatively, unless associated with

some form of nostalgia, to young adults. Thus, between these two groups, adolescents will

benefit or suffer more significantly.

Emo and metal exist as subcultures of rock music, each with its own identity and

understanding. Focusing on emo music, Sam de Boise states, "It [emo] emerged from the

American suburbs, areas of varying white middle-class affluence, and articulated an aggressive

opposition to the middle-class conservatism of the parent generation, both lyrically and

sonically."[22] Although De Boise's article focuses largely on the entitlement of many in the emo

community, this is a functional definition. The reasons for this seemingly aggressive opposition

towards parents, as will be laid out later, are largely based on a need to establish an identity and

deal with the struggles of life in their way, similar to how Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote

The Sorrows of Young Werther to help to work through personal difficulties.[23]

These genres possess aggressive musical and lyrical aspects. In emo culture, they are

often centered around relationships. One example is in the lyrics of "Until the Day I Die" by the

band Story of the Year. In this song, the second verse sings "my hands are at your throat, and I

think I hate you, but still, we'll say, remember when like we always do."[24] The lyrics are a poetic

image of a relationship in good and bad times. Unfortunately, poetry can sometimes be lost on

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[21] Ibid

[22] Sam de Boise, "Cheer Up Emo Kid: Rethinking the 'Crisis of Masculinity' in Emo", 227.

[23] Tobin Siebers, "The Werther Effect: The Esthetics of Suicide," *An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 26, no. 1 Winter 1993: 15-34.

[24] Story of the Year. *Until the Day I Die.* Page Avenue. Maverick, 2003.

listeners and feels more like encouragement to take part in harmful acts. As de Boise affirms, "The metaphors invoked here are often linked to physical harm, suggesting that emotions are painful but that love, in particular, is a necessary source of pain."[25] Despite this trait existing in both metal and emo music the differences between these two genres will need to be addressed to create a conclusive understanding of each.

The musicians writing metal and emo music often use this style of writing to express events going on in their own lives. Deborah L. Pierce looks into mental health and music education stating, "over the many years that I have been involved with and observed the music profession, I have often been saddened by how musicians struggle either with physical or psychological problems and how often they do not understand what their music can bring to their own lives."[26] Although Parr is discussing the visual arts his finding extends to many that partake in the arts stating, "by definition, different to their audience and are often conceived as being dysfunctional in respect."[27] Artists write from isolation, emotional vulnerability, and being more honest with being "dysfunctional." This leads to genres that cope with amplified feelings or perceptions. Holly Kruse, whose work discusses theories writes, "as much as the word 'identification' seems to imply a sense of belonging, perhaps, even more, it describes a process of differentiation."[28]

If artists are writing music to cope with their emotional state, then it stands to reason that fans of the genre likely listen with a similar objective in mind. This can help to create an

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[25] de Boise, S. (2014). "Cheer up emo kid: rethinking the 'crisis of masculinity' in emo," 225-242.

[26] Deborah L. Pierce, "Rising to a New Paradigm: Infusing Health and Wellness into the Music Curriculum." *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, (2012): 171.

[27] Hester Parr, "Mental Health, the Arts and Belongings," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, (2006): 151.

[28] Holly Kruse, "Subcultural Identity in Alternative Music Culture." *Popular Music*, 1993: 34.

emotionally honest culture, and a culture of selfishness at the same time. One person may feel less alone, while another feel justified regarding harmful thoughts. Anastasi expounding on who typically created and listened to emo, explains, "many boys are eager to be heard and understood, and they want a connection with others as well as the accompanied healing. This longing for nurture is often kept silent because it is seen as weak and 'feminine.' Many adolescent boys suffer from the effects of this 'Boy Code,' longing for outlets of expression."[29] The choice of interpreting the music as empathy or encouragement to harm comes down to the ability to separate poetry from reality. From a poetic example, a person may understand that the "raven" in Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven" is an expression for his mental state. Yet another person might believe that he has a pet raven living above his door. Although perhaps an oversimplification, this is possibly what occurred in mirror suicides real self-harm inspired by literary characters.

The themes of emo and metal deeply resonated with people going through coming-of-age experiences. Challenges ranging from hormones, home life, house rules, and social status can cause a great deal of confusion. In the early teen years, these changes occur at a rate with little time to process. An example of this is observed by Anastasi, who states, "adolescents tend to be in and out of relationships so frequently that their hearts seldom have an opportunity to mend from the previous break-up before the next one drops onto their lap like a bomb."[30] With situations that are new to their human experience happening in rapid succession, a means of coping would logically develop at an equal pace. People tend to function best in a culture that mirrors their own life experiences. It follows that they would seek out others in similar

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[29] Aaron P. Anastasi, "Adolescent Boys' Use of Emo Music as Their Healing Lament," *Journal of Religion and Health*, (2005): 304.

[30] Ibid., 314.

situations. This results in a unified culture being developed around similar life circumstances and factors.

According to Adam Mayer and Jeffrey Timberlake, " Heavy metal emerged in the 1970s from the blues and hard rock but, especially since the late 1980s, has become sonically and aesthetically far removed from the pop music mainstream."[31] They then add that "contemporary metal music explores aesthetic and lyrical themes that run counter to those found in more popular performing arts."[32] This concludes that metal musicians often write to defy what is acceptable and focus on darker elements of existence. Metal listeners identify with the defiance of authority, as mentioned previously by Adam Mayer and Jeffrey Timberlake. Metal music can be used to process emotions, situations, and scenarios. It serves as coming-of-age music but does express emotions that may not exist in American pop music. A musical example of this is the song "Bodies" by Drowning Pool. It is something that resonates metaphorically with metal listeners, as though the bodies hitting the floor are obstacles in life. It also functions as a means of releasing aggressive tendencies through music.

Emo originates from the 1980s, and during the early 2000s, it gained a deeper foothold. Emo music expresses its ideas poetically. An example of this can be found in the song "I'm Not Okay (I Promise)" by My Chemical Romance. One excerpt is in the pre-chorus, "forget about the dirty looks, the photographs your boyfriend took, you said you read me like a book, but the pages all are torn and frayed."[33] While utilizing a poetic tone, this is written from a first-person perspective, describing the feelings felt by another. The song could be interpreted as the singer

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[31] Adam Mayer, and Jeffrey M. Timberlake. ""The Fist in the Face of God": Heavy Metal Music and Decentralized Cultural Diffusion." *Sociological Perspectives*, 2014: 28.

[32] Ibid.

[33] My Chemical Romance, *I'm Not Okay (I Promise),* Comps, Frank Anthony Iero, Gerard Arthur Way, Matt Pelissier, Michael James Way, & Raymond Toro, 2004.

wanting to become romantically involved with another person. This is the likely reality; however, the symbolism takes effect when the singer sings, "you said you read me like a book, but the pages all are torn and frayed."[34] This is a common theme of applying something that could be very true to life and then using poetry and poetic license to alter the meaning around the lyrics. Stating that the pages are all torn and frayed would mean that the singer feels very much damaged to the point of being uniquely disaffected, and incredibly difficult to relate to. The use of damage is expressed as a distinct personality trait through metaphor.

Musically, Emo often uses a minimalist style of writing that focuses on one or two musical elements, typically vocals and another instrument. This is the case with emo and punk bands like Blink 182, who had drum virtuoso Travis Barker, and Sum 41's lead guitar player. Emo differentiates from punk by sounding more composed than punk rock. There is less focus on a set of power chords and more on storytelling. A prime example of this is the album *Welcome to the Black Parade* by My Chemical Romance. The album has an orchestrated feel and uses more marching band tones in their bigger numbers. The implementation of larger orchestration creates a sense of familiarity, especially with high school and middle school marching bands. Implementing more composed elements invigorates a sense of familiarity and helps to increase the effect of the music on the listener.

Nostalgia is a powerful tool used in emo music. Vuoskoski, Thompson, McIlwain, and Eerola write, "although sadness was the most salient emotion experienced (in response to sad excerpts), emotions such as nostalgia, peacefulness, and wonder were evident."[35] Often the artist speaks to a younger audience, discussing things from a nostalgic perspective. This makes them

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Vuoskoski, et al, ":Who Enjoys Listening to Sad Music and Why," 314.

relatable while simultaneously projecting what many in the culture would expect from their future lives. This projection of what is to come could even be seen as creating nostalgia through expectation. It serves as a kind of forensic nostalgia expecting something that may never happen because it was stated to seem commonplace by predecessors, a created want for something that does not exist, giving the impression of desire that has not, and perhaps will not, come to pass.

Often the drive behind violent imagery in metal comes from a want to express emotions from vulgarity to fantasy. The song "Betrayed" by Avenged Sevenfold. The song is about the murder of Dimebag Darrell. In an excerpt of the verse, the lyrics go "a smoking gun in your hand, now don't you realize what you've done, put a bullet in his back, your hero since you were so young,"[36] telling a historical story by expressing the sadness of seeing someone betray someone formerly dear to them. The lyrics focus on events watched from the outside in and retold in a way that fits the medium. Although citing literal events, given their third-party nature, this allows for a wide variety of interpretations. These lyrics that line up with fantasy-based poetry fall closer in line with metal, giving an allure of being over the top. Although sometimes profound it also allows for incredibly violent imagery. Where the expression made through gratuitous violent metaphor is a fantastical retelling or telling of something.

Summarizing the above-mentioned statement by Mayer and Timberlake, metal music is a genre that has largely existed defying pop culture and authority. Viewing school and adult officials as an authority is substantiated by Amy Binder, who writes, "heavy metal lyrics stake a claim for the autonomy of the young person against school and adult officials."[37] The song "Down with the Sickness" by the band Disturbed is one example. The song heavily focuses on

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[36] Avenged Sevenfold, *Betrayed,* Comp, Avenged Sevenfold, 2005.

[37] Amy Binder, "Constructing Racial Rhetoric: Media Depictions of Harm in Heavy Metal and Rap Music," *American Sociological Review* (1993): 765.

accepting that everything is not alright. Lyrically and musically the song also falls outside of what would be considered acceptable by most pop culture standards with elements discussing emotional and physical abuse from an adult authority figure. In addition to this bands commonly call into question elements of society in the United States at this time. One such example is the song "Chop Suey!" by System of a Down. The song focuses heavily on societal pressures and their potential result in suicide or the loss of life, all topics that are usually avoided when trying to sell music across a top forty line-up.

Regarding other rock-based genres, a guitar player from this decade could express that part of the rise of these genres was the disappearance of grunge. Many grunge artists did have technical writing and the genre was cemented in an earthy sound and feel. This meant that virtuosic musicianship was rare. With the resurgence of metal from bands such as Atreyu who opens the song, Bleeding Mascara, with a flashy arpeggiated guitar solo. The need for flashy musicianship returned with sounds and dramatic expressions resembling bands like Megadeath, Metallica, and Iron Maiden. Instead of restraint to tell a story an element of grunge music dramatic flair became the default means of expressing a story.

The rawness of life experiences and a desire for empathy are common goals of most people. Sleigh and McElroy state "that music listening is likely to support a mood rather than negate it."[38] "I'm Not Okay" by My Chemical Romance speaks of a young teenager feeling depressed and isolated more so than the contemporary hit "Yeah" by Usher. The former is a song concerned with announcing an emotional state, and the latter is about going to a club to celebrate or escape life. Anastasi writes, "music plays many roles in the life of common American

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[38] Merry J. Sleigh, and Jordan McElroy. "The Effect of Music Listening Versus Written Reframing on Mood Management." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2014: 312.

adolescents. One of these is the role of counselor and comforter. Instead of talking out their deep sense of loneliness and disconnection, they turn up the music and allow it to soothe, comfort, and even distract them"[39]

The people who listen to these genres are often looking for validation and/or empathy, a feeling of community a means to feel emotions without being condemned for them. Whether a person is sad, angry, pressured, or overwhelmed, these genres provide a means of empathizing with these feelings and sensations, that may not seem as represented in other genres to the listeners of emo and metal. These two genres share a focus on the darker elements of life. As Sleigh and McElroy discuss. People desire music that supports their mood, rather than contradicting it. For the listener, these genres are musical forms of expression that resonate. As Garrido and Schubert state, "it is possible that this particular form of empathy may, in turn, be related to the capacity to imaginatively engage with fantasy and fictional subjects."[40]

<div align="center">The Time</div>

Around the turn of the twentieth century, tragic events such as the Columbine High School shooting and the attack on the World Trade Center took place, shaking the world for many Americans. What followed was fear in schools and a conflict that would stretch over twenty years. Violence during this decade also began to rise, according to an FBI active shooter report.[41] This caused a cultural shift where many secure places now felt vulnerable. Due to war, many would grow up without parents, and fear of violence from peers. This cultural shift

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[39] Anastasi, "Cheer up Emo Kid: Rethinking the 'Crisis of Masculinity' in Emo," 312

[40] Sandra Garrido and Emery Schubert, "Individual Differences in the Enjoyment of Negative Emotion in Music: A Literature Review and Experiment," *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (2011): 282.

[41] FBI, "fbi.gov" *fbi.gov,* September 16, 2013, file:///Volumes/D/Projects/(U)_ActiveShooter021317_17B_WEB.pdf (accessed October 7, 2021), 8.

increased the growth in popularity of metal and emo. A historical comparison can be seen in the 60s with the anti-war and hippie movements during Vietnam. Both periods reflected a need to lash out and express the feelings of those creating the music. Although the circumstances and expressive outlet served by these musical styles resemble one another.

Emo music, according to de Boise, is "American hardcore, taking inspiration from British punk, was a reaction to the economic and political conditions of the Reagan/Thatcher era in which many disenfranchised young people found themselves at odds with the perceived political establishment."[42] According to Daschuk, "actors implicitly regarded as "authentic" punks (emos) not only testify that their authenticity derives from being intrinsically drawn to the practices and values endorsed within the subculture but argue that their authenticity is perpetuated through stern allegiance to those customs and dispositions."[43] Based on the want for authentic responses, musicians and audiences alike would likely be looking to make and experience music that would reflect societal taboos. This period provided the perfect ground for musical genres that could express these frustrations. This came with the risk of both hurting and helping. It provided a means of catharsis against the feelings that were present at this time. On the other side of the coin, many people would see in this music justification for acts of self-harm.

<div align="center">The Space Investigated</div>

In the United States, technological changes during the early 2000s allowed for the growth of the availability of these genres. This is largely due to the accessibility of the internet. As Mayer and Timberlake state, "the internet is accessible to a large number of people at almost any

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[42] de Boise, "Cheer up Emo Kid: Rethinking the 'Crisis of Masculinity' in Emo," 227.

[43] Daschuk, "Messageboard Confessional: Online Discourse and the Production of the 'Emo Kid'," 87.

time and is relatively inexpensive."[44] In 2001 Napster, the site used for "sharing" music, was created, and this gave access to music to many people that may not have been able to listen to the music prior. With this rise in instant access to music, as well as the ability to create and copy music from CDs, more niche genres began to grow in popularity. In the case of emo music, de Boise states that "the audiences and performers are largely white, middle-class males."[45] Many of them would have access to means of easily sharing and accessing this music. This availability served the audience's need for expressing their emotions, which de Boise characterizes as "an aggressive opposition to the middle-class conservatism of the parent generation, both lyrically and sonically."[46]

According to Mayer and Timberlake "metal diffused throughout the globe precisely during the period where there was a little pecuniary incentive to start a metal band."[47] In their study *"The Fist in the Face of God": Heavy Metal Music and Decentralized Cultural Diffusion* the authors focus on internet distribution. On the West Coast bands like Avenged Sevenfold started to come to the forefront. In the Southeast part of the United States Daschuk states, "by 1997, the small North Carolina label Deep Elm Records could pitch its first Emo Diaries compilation album."[48] Access to music around the country became easier through the internet, decentralizing much of the musical world. These genres could be accessed by almost anyone wanting to listen and connect with them.

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[44] Mayer and Timberlake, "'The Fist in the Face of God': Heavy Metal Music and Decentralized Cultural Diffusion," 33

[45] de Boise, "Cheer up Emo Kid: Rethinking the 'Crisis of Masculinity' in Emo," 226

[46] Ibid., 227.

[47] Mayer and Timberlake "'The Fist in the Face of God': Heavy Metal Music and Decentralized Cultural Diffusion," 29

[48] Daschuk, "Messageboard Confessional: Online Discourse and the Production of the 'Emo Kid'," 92

Why This Music Spoke

Music is often a means of coping with the world around us. As Gebhardt, Kunkel, and von Georgi discuss, "patients with mental disorders show an increased use of music compared to healthy controls."[49] Music provides validation, reflection, or expression of emotions to people, especially emotions that may or may not be socially acceptable to express in other ways. While the feeling of rage or disappointment may be acceptable, it is of course the case that, a violent response is not acceptable. In contrast, a rational response would be singing a song regarding emotional pain. McElroy and Sleigh's citation of Friedman, Gordis, and Forster, summarizes, "adults in sad moods perceived happy music as inappropriate and thus were resistant to listening to it."[50] Extending this statement Garrido and Schubert express, "people often appear to be attracted to music and other art forms expressing negative emotions, and perhaps more peculiarly, music evoking negative feelings in the listener."[51] Music reflecting the state of the person gives the necessary room and time to process emotions.

Emo music focuses primarily on negative emotions. The reason for this is stated by Vuoskoski, Thompson, McIlwain, and Eerola who write, "openness to experience and global empathy were significantly connected with a liking for sad excerpts."[52] In the song "Disenchanted" by My Chemical Romance, the music is not explicitly sad, yet it conveys a melancholic state in both the melody, guitar tone, and chord progression. This feeling is

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[49] Stefan Gebhardt, Markus Kunkel, and Richard von Georgi, "Emotion Modulation in Psychiatric Patients Through Music," *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal* (2014): 485-493.

[50] Friedman R.S. Gordis E. Forster J. Re-exploring the influence of sad mood on music preference. (2012). Quoted in Sleigh, Merry J., and Jordan McElroy. "The Effect of Music Listening Versus Written Reframing on Mood Management." *Music Perception: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 2014: 312.

[51] Garrido and Schubert, "Individual Differences in the Enjoyment of Negative Emotion in Music: A Literature Review and Experiment," 279

[52] Vuoskoski, et al., "Who Enjoys Listening to Sad Music and Why?," 314

maintained as the full band joins in, expressing the sentiment of looking back on life and feeling disenchanted with reality. The song aims to empathize with those that feel disenchanted with reality. A different musical example from the same band but with lyrical emphasis is the song "I'm Not Okay."[53] The song itself is almost ironic given the mood. The upbeat and almost cheerful accompanying guitars set a different tone. This contrasts with the lyrics, which focus on the trials associated with coming of age. This could send a message to a listener about the idea of putting on a happy face to the world, while not being okay. What could be seen as rebellion is a mere mask of the pain felt. In contrast, "Rock Show"[54] by Blink 182 recounts the story of meeting a girl at a rock show, developing a relationship, and its ending. Yet after its end, the lyricist does not express anger, just reminiscence. Based on this evidence, if someone went through a painful breakup, they might prefer to listen to "I'm Not Okay" rather than "Rock Show."

Metal, using metaphor, and fantasy, also possesses an empathetic tone. Themes can vary wildly from extreme highs to extreme lows. The song "Afterlife" by Avenged Sevenfold is about someone who has passed away and pleads to return home. In the end, their request to return to their loved ones is granted. This story, while fictional, is about a desire to live a fulfilled life, a thought that resonates deeply with many people's need to create a sense of purpose. 'Bleeding Mascara" by Atreyu sings about a woman who, from the lyricist's perspective, is venomous and destructive. If seeking emotional empathy from music, a person witnessing or involved in a toxic relationship would likely find "Bleeding Mascara" cathartic. It is important to note that

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[53] My Chemical Romance, *I'm Not Okay (I Promise),* Comps, Frank Anthony Iero, Gerard Arthur Way, Matt Pelissier, Michael James Way, & Raymond Toro, 2004.

[54] Tom Delonge and Mark Hoopus, *The Rock Show,* ed. by Blink 182, Greatest Hits. Santa Monica, California: Geffen Records, 2001.

sentiments found in "Bleeding Mascara" are violent. In one of the verses, the singer says, "Does their marrow taste of sweetness? Sweetness, I hope you choke." These are words that if said directly and outside of an artistic context would sound incredibly violent. Yet in the poetic field where they are sung, it can serve purely as a sentiment and not as a threat, one that is harsh and negative but through empathetic resonance can minimize or prevent feelings of isolation.

How the Music Affects

In pursuit of empathy, people will choose arts that reflect or drive their emotional state. Playing happy music at a funeral may not instill a sense of levity. Instead, it will likely be frowned upon and seen as a gross mishandling of the situation. A soft hymn, however, such as "It Is Well" a hymn reflecting on the tragedies of life and acknowledging God as in control would provide more comfort. In contrast, a nihilistic worldview due to a breakup, rejection, or divorce, would be reflected with sarcastic musical and lyrical elements. The goal of how the music is used to affect listeners then is to offer a place to mentally process or amplify an emotional state, ideally serving as a means of empathy.

When not being used as a means of catharsis, music will often act as fuel, amplifying an emotional state. Steven Stack and Jim Gundlach observe this in an article about why country music is often associated with suicide. They state that "while country music per se probably will not drive people to suicide, given its link to a subculture and its appeal to persons within the subculture who are already at increased risk of suicide, it can impact suicide rates."[55] This evidence shows people amplifying their feelings through music. Although stylistically quite different, country music shares a number of features with metal and emo music. A trait shared by

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[55] Steven Stack and Jim Gundlach, "The Effect of Country Music on Suicide," *Social Forces*, (19920: 215.

country, metal, and emo music is that they are based on expressing the negative aspects of the human experience. If these genres amplify feelings of loneliness, isolation, rejection, neglect, or a sense of meaninglessness, it could increase the likelihood of self-harm and suicide. This potential effect is sometimes seen as a stereotype associated with these genres, one that may or may not be verified by research.

If people desire connection and inclusion, then it follows they would join a community that matches their values. Emo and metal music offer a position for social rejection and ironic conformity among non-conformists. A community of the isolated could provide a sense of inclusion. This creates a space to express current emotions. Singing about teen suicide and the harm it causes to those that care could bring awareness to the issue, ideally removing the sense of loneliness in these moments. In more direct scenarios, singing about not committing suicide can give someone cause to choose life. As Anastasi wrote regarding an interview, "during an interview one adolescent said, 'I listen to Emo music when I'm feeling lonely. I usually listen to it when I'm by myself. I feel comforted because I can get out my angry…. well, my negative feelings.'"[56] From a historical standpoint, there have always been songs about being an outcast or unreturned emotion. "I'll be Watching You" by the Police or "I'm not Okay" by My Chemical Romance are not the only examples. The *Symphonie fantastique* by Hector Berlioz, premiering in 1830, was inspired by an actual relationship that Berlioz wanted to have but which was ultimately unsuccessful. The five-movement symphony is a musical story with a program. Written from a first- and third-person perspective, the symphony expresses his falling in love, attempt courtship, rejection, isolation, murder of his beloved, trial, execution, and a grotesque vision of a "witch's sabbath" in which his beloved is revealed to be a witch. These themes can be

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[56] Anastasi, "Adolescent Boys' Use of Emo Music as Their Healing Lament," 315

seen in other music, such as "Momma" by My Chemical Romance, which takes a fatalistic look at the world and declares "Momma, we all go to hell." If music like this has existed for centuries or more, the want for it likely also exists for it.

Outside of music, morbid themes are often seen as appealing in modern Western culture. Books such as Dracula by Bram Stoker and The Sorrows of Young Werther were massively successful, creating horror and gothic cultures surrounding them. These historical examples serve as demonstrative of an aspect of culture that extends to the emo perspective. The attempt to address darker parts of the human psyche and normalize it helps by offering relatable media. The desire of those that feel outcast to feel included is likely what gives rise to the popularity of these themes. By extension, it is the popularity of media with these themes that help provide evidence for the popularity of emo/metal music.

Concerns

A desire for catharsis or a poetic medium to express feelings is historically established, yet there is also a historical basis for self-harm and violence with these mediums. Emo and metal both fall into the stereotypes of emotional manipulation, violence, and self-harm. As a means of emotional expression or control, it can also serve to fuel negative activities, such as those mentioned above. Previously documented research will be recalled during this portion of the Literature Review. These concerns could indicate if the pursuit of music that has a history of encouraging such negative behaviors should be endorsed or rejected.

Additionally, there is a concern about these genres and their associations with certain forms of misogyny. As previously discussed, most of the demographic that engaged with this culture was white middle-class males. De Boise expresses this by stating:

> The intensely homosocial composition of the bands aside, the embracing of
> heteronormative relationships as a cornerstone of the music, the frequent underlying

misogyny, the unease with which love compromises individual autonomy and the way in which males are perceived as the victims of female sexuality, all suggest that emo is merely an aesthetic reworking of gendered power dynamics.[57]

Part of this as de Boise explains is the act of gender-bending where young men often embrace more emotional aspects. This in and of itself is not harmful. However, what does raise concern is an accompanying feeling of entitlement, seen in lyrics, particularly regarding attitudes towards women who reject romantic advances and affections.

When comparing the sides of the coin around self-harm, and suicide, contrasting the observable benefits of engaging with this music and in this culture, the negatives tend to follow those also found in country music. First, music rarely acts as the sole means of driving someone into this state. It is normally influenced by two prominent factors, peers, and family. The most influential of the two are peers. Abrutyn and Mueller state that "teenagers are greatly influenced by their peers' values and behaviors which may increase their vulnerability to suicide epidemics."[58] This can be found through the internet as adolescents of this generation find others that partake in acts of self-harm, or bullies that continue to impress a feeling of being isolated. This is where the influence can take hold. Peer groups are shown to have the most influence on an individual, much like music groups can nurse healthy or harmful behavior. If the act of cutting is seen as a release from one member of a group it can quickly escalate and encourage another in their peer group. This nihilistic perspective affects many in the emo community. As Carla Zdanow states, "These values can be seen as an expression of Nihilism in that they confirm the ideas that there is no point to life and there is no point in trying to be happy, as you will gain no

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[57] de Boise, S. (2014), "Cheer up emo kid: rethinking the 'crisis of masculinity' in emo," 225-242.

[58] Seth Abrutyn and Anna S. Mueller, "Are Suicidal Behaviors Contagious in Adolescence? Using Longitudinal Data to Examine," *American Sociological Review, 79, No. 2* (2014): 211-27.

meaning from it. Throughout the various content examined in this research, the idea of Nihilism is evident in some of the member's discussions of the worthlessness of life."[59] A lack of hope and an acceptance that everything is pointless drives these acts of self-harm. Snow further asserts this point after analyzing an online forum concluding that "The honor and praise of self-harm was a particularly dominant theme, where members saw the self-destructive and injurious behavior as "good" and "cool", negating the fact that it is dangerous and may result in life-threatening situations."[60] Regarding country music, which can sometimes share the same themes, Stack and Gundlach say this about music's influence on suicide: "through connecting with suicidogenic conditions and moods of the suicidal population, country music may increase suicide risk. Country music per se is not expected to drive people to suicide. But, given the existence of an organized country subculture, the risk of suicide is enhanced."[61]

When looking at metal, the music typically has an aggressive tone. If there is mention of suicide, it is usually referring to giving up when rage does nothing. For this reason, metal is perhaps less likely to drive a person to end their own life. Themes in metal can certainly be dark and morbid, and this could lead to making the idea of death attractive. It is, however, normally balanced by a disdain for something. There are misogynistic and violent themes in metal, which could follow the logic of fueling the fire of rage and perhaps self-hatred that could result in suicide.

Emo, in contrast, is entirely based on allowing access to every emotion, and this deep expression of emotion without regulation is what can lead to potentially negative outcomes.

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[59] Carla Zdanow and Bianca Wright, "The Representation of Self Injury and Suicide on Emo Social Networking Groups," *African Sociological Review / Revue Africaine de Sociologie 16, No. 2* (2012): 89-90

[60] Ibid. 90

[61] Stack and Gundlach, "The Effect of Country Music on Suicide," 211-218.

Although cutting is viewed as a form of release, it could be the step from going down the arm instead of across. In various articles, it seems to represent a cry for help, a means of release, or identifying with others. The culture of emo often celebrates cuts and, just as training in the gym may garner acceptance among athletes, cutting could garner acceptance among other emos. When music impacts the culture through darker emotions, the poetry within it could be a means of trying to express the emotions of self-harm without committing the act. Yet it could be seen by members of the community as permission to engage in violent acts instead of a means of expressing themselves without committing.

Based on the evidence, it seems as though the music and the culture feed each other. Frequently artists seem to want to express what is happening through musical means. If their life is joyous, the music that comes from them is likely joyous. If in mourning, the music is likely to be more sorrowful. This tragically fuels the fire for self-harm instead of dampening the fire with empathy. Based on the literature, it seems as though the music itself, then, is not the issue but rather the listener's interpretation of it. If this is the case for emo and less frequently metal music, the concerns would be based solely on the listener and surrounding culture, over the actual musical/lyrical content.

The remaining question, then, is how did the music invoke such a response? If celebrity and popularity tend to be a lesser factor than peers towards self-harm, this is likely true of music. A more accurate statement is likely that emo/metal music allows and enables expression through its lyrical content, which endorses self-harm. Much of this music is likely based on poetically expressed feelings and emotions. This in turn drives a response from an audience, which produces a response from artists and becomes a self-sustaining form of musical violence. The interpretation presented is left to the audience. This interpretation impacts peer groups and

expands further. The peer group which has the most influence impacts other groups. This increases popularity, giving musicians and lyricists more violent language to express their feelings and mental state.

Relationship from Culture to Music

Concerningly there is an observable presence of violence within the metal/emo community. To best evaluate the culture and the music, the question of which fuels one the most must be investigated. First, cultures that drive self-harm or violence are encouraged mostly by the immediate peer group, then family, then environment, and then finally by celebrities and outside sources.

First, how are peer groups/cliques created where acts of violence are considered acceptable? Most likely, the final elements of entirely outside influences, such as music/lyrics, and celebrities would be the driving factor for a small group. With that said, there are multiple examples throughout the research of many within the community that partake in acts of self-harm not being the majority among their peers. It is by this minority that peers are attracted towards a similar mindset, engaging in acts of self-harm.

With the creation of this smaller group, it is likely others would seek to find inclusion, whether through direct or online interaction. Within this, there is the creation of a peer group where acts of violence against themselves or another have been developed. This now creates an environment most likely to increase the behavior. Furthermore, members of this group are likely to bond over this commonality, developing behaviors of violence as a new normal. Further cementing this would be outside bullying mocking it.[62] As persons that commit acts of violence

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[62] Seth Abrutyn and Anna S. Mueller, "Are Suicidal Behaviors Contagious in Adolescence? Using Longitudinal Data to Examine," *American Sociological Review, 79, No. 2* (2014): 211-27.

find solace in others like themselves, being further excluded as freaks would be far more likely to drive them deeper into cliques that accept this form of behavior. Now, what pushes acts of self-harm has become three-pronged: music, peer group, and outside impact.

These cliques then continue to share the music they most relate to with each other. As Thomas Turino states in *Music as Social Life,* "during middle school, my children learned what 'their music' was largely from friends and from listening to the radio…. it was also used to establish common identities among friends and along gender lines outside the home."[63] He further explains stating that "coming to know oneself and grappling with personal and social identities are central activities of life that are especially intense during young adulthood."[64] This helps to establish that individual identity is developed during the middle school ages, giving further credence to the impact of music during coming of age.

The other observation to evaluate is the scale at which artists create music that develops this culture. Throughout this chapter, there are various examples of artists using violent imagery and expression in their music. Such imagery and music could even be used to develop this culture. Violent imagery and expression began as a largely poetic expression less of a desire to cause self-harm, and more to express the intensity of the emotions violently using poetry. Although some intend lyrics for poetry, others may interpret it as a literal expression. Purveyors of metal and emo reinterpreted poetry as permission to engage in violent acts to express these intense emotional times.

With these alarming, pandemic-like rates of self-harm, suicide, and violence the following question is: did music feed into, or did it seek to combat, these themes? While though

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[63] Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation*, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2008, 93.

[64] Ibid., 94.

to a large extent, these cultures accepted that violent imagery and poetry were part of their themes, several artists have acknowledged this. Sum 41 quoted the rates of suicide in the early 2000s as "the leading cause of death in Canada and the fastest growing cause of death in North America."[65] To fight a nihilist and hopeless view of the world that often grew among a sub-culture that embraced self-harm, the band set out to call out encourage a generation to find another way out of their darker times. As mentioned above, there is an element to metal/emo culture that stands starkly against self-harm and violence, often with the intent of using violent imagery to call out the injustices that are committed. Although this could have a counter effect, much of this side of the narrative insists that there is a future, and it is up to people to push for a hopeful future. A term heard in the military is "embrace the suck." This simply means that things are not great, but if circumstances are accepted, then one can work within them. This line of thought is a hybridization of stoicism and emo/metal cultures. Stoicism is casually viewed as an unmovable human who is unaffected by life. This, however, is not accurate based on the proverbs from Epictetus.[66] Stoicism exists as a balance between nihilism and realist views of life. Emotions are only normal and are celebrated. This contrasts with a culture of violence and self-harm. This culture sings of the pain, joys, and experiences, often being honest about their emotions. Yet, instead of screaming that the response is to give in to violent impulses, the best thing is to create and find healthy responses. Thus, many in the culture are encouraged to find ways to redirect and change their own lives.

Two sides of the same coin with two polarizing ideas continue to exist. As this is the case the goal then is to reconcile the violence with the celebration of emotional expression. This likely

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[65] Deryck Whibley, Greig Nori & Steve Jocz. *My Direction.* Does This Look Infected? 2002.

[66] Epictetus, *The Golden Sayings of Epictetus,* ed. by Hastings Crossley, Public Domain, 2006, https://books.apple.com/us/book/the-golden-sayings-of-epictetus/id395546998.

will fall from person to person, and most importantly from clique to clique. Knowing this, the best approach to prevent negative reactions such as self-harm and violence would be to intervene and influence the sub-cultures, albeit without being seen as an act of aggression against their culture. This could cause isolation via rejection, or retaliation. Either reaction could send a person into a poorer state of mental health. Finding a means of changing cliques and direct peer groups could be done with someone with greater ease if done gradually.

<div align="center">Defiance of Gender Stereotypes</div>

Emo gender-bending is a part of the core culture. Despite this, it carries an alternate form of misogyny. This is accomplished by controlling another person, normally in a male-to-female relationship, via emotional manipulation, and threats against oneself, using feigned weakness to exercise control. It attempts to exert control over another person by making them feel emotionally responsible for any damage or potential damage done. This form of manipulation is the most popular as a means of establishing influence. This behavior is most often seen as being committed by men within the emo culture. Less destructively, gender-bending can be seen as individuals that are attracted to others openly expressing emotions. Physical representations such as men with makeup, tighter clothes, jewelry, and long hair are worn in a way more often associated with women. Women tend to either wear tight or extremely baggy clothing, defying traditional representations of gender expresses emotional vulnerability while defying traditional beauty standards.[67] Both cultures unite under a perceived non-conformity while identifying with others of similar communal values.

As a culture metal and emo, both possess the trait of pursuing defiance of societal

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[67] de Boise. "Cheer up Emo Kid: Rethinking the 'Crisis of Masculinity' in Emo," 225-42.

standards. In mutual pursuit of defiance by engaging with peers with similar anti-conformist values, those bonded together form a clique. De Boise observed several dangers throughout interactions with this culture. Despite emo culture embracing men being more honest with their emotions, this led to a risk of men using this new position to express a new toxic form of misogyny.[68] De Boise quantifies these toxic relationships as: "Using poetry and lyrics stating how the male would rather be dead than away from their partner and be incomplete without them. This would place blame, and social pressure to maintain a relationship that would be toxic to the partner in the relationship." [69] Although the expansion of gender-bending behavior could certainly be seen as a good thing, it still runs the same risks that can exist from what is commonly called "toxic masculinity." A musical example demonstrating this behavior is represented in the song "Until the Day I Die" by Story of the Year. The song seems at first like a relationship of deep commitment. The lyrics read. "Should I bite my tongue? Until blood soaks my shirt, we'll never fall apart, tell me why this hurts so much. My hands are at your throat, and I think I hate you, but still, we'll say, 'remember when' just like we always do. Until the day I die, I'll spill my heart for you."[70] The song uses the violent imagery of a relationship that runs in circles of never wanting to separate from one another while controlling each other through emotional manipulation, insisting that they would give anything for one another. Outside of the musical media, the danger could be seen as similar to the romanticization of the incredibly violent relationship between the comic book characters The Joker and Harley-Quinn. This logic encourages the reasoning, "if this is part of my culture it must be normal." As stated mathematically, if "I" (a) am part of this culture, (b) and this culture endorses this, then (c) I

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] (Story of the Year, 2003)

must endorse. In wanting to belong there is an acceptance of harmful behavior towards oneself and others. This could be seen as healthy yet runs the risk of misunderstandings resulting in unhealthy relationships. In contrast, in the song Misery Business[71] by Paramore, the lyrics paint a picture of a woman waiting for a man to leave a toxic relationship with another woman, then exclaiming joy about now dating the man upon breaking up with the other woman. The artist is not seeking to control via violence but instead is elated at being in a relationship with the other person. Although the song focuses on happiness, it still falls under the emo genre, as it has the twist of outdoing a romantic rival. As the song focuses on success it sets a hopeful view, something that contrasts previously mentioned elements of nihilism. Continuing a positive outlook, Sum 41's song "My Direction" calls out the suicide rates in North America. The lyrics focus on the desire for perfection and accepting that there is room to grow. The chorus of the song ends with the line "I just know that life's not so bad,"[72] focusing on the realities of life. The song addresses several issues faced by members of emo and metal culture, encouraging listeners that things will be better. This contrasts much of the nihilism and lack of joy in life. Sharing the perspective that life is worth celebrating. Contrasting with de Boise's points are individuals that see literature and culture as a means of catharsis, allowing space for music to act as a point for catharsis, as well as allowing for expanded roles within a gender, social status, and racial profile that typically would speak to dismiss emotion also could help to create art and a space for those that desired to live as themselves. Instead of using this to control or exhibit any toxic traits, one can work through thoughts and feelings. Although concern that a new mask on older negative traits could still exist, there is a necessity to evaluate a music's reasons to

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[71] Hayley Williams and Josh Farro, *Misery Business,* Riot! Fueled by Ramen, 2007.

[72] Sum 41, *My Direction (Explicit), e*d. by Greig Nori. Does This Look Infected? New York City, New York: Aquarius Island Mercury, 2005.

exist. For metal and emo, they are: first, defying standard culture and predefined definitions of existence; second, establishing another culture where self-expression is fully embraced; and finally, allowing freedom to be oneself without oppression from others. These root pursuits add a great deal of value to the culture. Sadly, like many good intentions, many find a way to corrupt the intent and use it to manipulate and control.

A Healthy Relationship with Emo/Metal Music

Based on the evidence it could be easy to assume that emo and metal music and their equated cultures are incredibly toxic yet as discussed previously there is a reason why individuals choose music that mirrors feelings of anger, loneliness, rage, and rejection. People will experience negative events to varying degrees throughout their lives. At some level, no one has lived without trespass either by society or nature. As with most things in the world, there is a want to alleviate this pain. The desire for media that mirrors these states is evidence of this and an essential means of coping with it. Correct cultural influence can drive an individual to have healthy outlets. Developing this is especially important during formative years when many people create habits, both healthy and unhealthy. Part of this is the development of coping mechanisms. An outcast, belonging to a culture that embraces them, is given a sense of purpose. That sense of purpose helps prevent acts of violence or self-harm. Using music and encouraging a side of the culture that works to be a safe space would be helpful when understanding the music for positive intent.

Metal and emo both create aggressive songs, as seen in the lyrics to the song "Down with the Sickness." Other examples, however, can be comical in their lyrical expression, serving as an alternative means of emotional release. The song "Blow" by Atreyu is an example of an

aggressive song that is so extreme it becomes nearly comedic.[73] It is a song of pure rage and a dismissal of other people's wants delivered with a less serious tone and more yelling to rid frustration. It could function as a song of sheer catharsis. When seen as a cathartic work, the violent lyrical imagery of the song is more socially acceptable. Whereas if the lyrics were said in interpersonal conversation, it could be perceived as verbal assault. Metaphorical violence functions as a cathartic value from emo and metal culture. The hope is to find out how to prevent self-harm and actual violence from occurring. Metal and emo are both powerful tools, they give emotional space and help people with their emotional development and to healthily manage their emotions.

Conclusion

Looking at who, what, when, where, and how emo and metal music related to millennials in the United States these musics were used for individuals dealing with coming-of-age emotions and experiences. The challenges experienced by these middle-class adolescents were put into song. Driving the growth of these genres was a time of cultural unrest and a desire to push against authority. With these cultural events, the act of having music that empathized with the struggles of a generation served as a means of emotional expression. In many ways the music and cultures around these genres were helpful, often providing a means of dealing with the many emotions and traumas of coming-of-age. The risk of the culture fueling acts of self-harm existed as either a form of release, attention seeking, or suicide, offering two sides of the same coin with external inputs being the largely deciding factors of how the music was received. Bringing individuals together through music, research suggests that lyrical content is less responsible for

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[73] Atreyu, "The Best of Atreyu," With Atreyu. 2006.

suicide rates. The primary driver for self-harm is peer groups. Music as catharsis falls to its interpretation of personal associations. Counter acting self-harm are peer groups that work to empathetically influence expressing emotions and life. These genres connect with their audience and share their emotional state. The space created by metal and emo music created a sense of unity among the lonely. Giving the feeling of being connected to others and knowing that someone else is not okay developed an empathetic audience that was trying to understand life. This music helped many through life events, especially among teens who felt the did not relate with others.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Project Thesis

Descriptions of Research Tools

This thesis's focus is on the effect that emo/metal music had on millennials in the United States. This opened two sides of a debate, one viewing this music as a tool for dealing with trying times in life and the other seeing it as extending acceptability to violence and self-harm. Due to this dichotomy, it is necessary to develop a tool that can measure, with some degree of accuracy, whether the music is a productive means of catharsis or, if it encourages violence. This measurement device is the table of risk because music can have either a positive or negative effect on a person, when certain conditions force a person past a certain point the effects are negative, when other conditions return them to the other side,t is likely to have a positive effect.

The test for this, as the primary research tool, was interviewed to see the accuracy of a pendulum metric determining the impact of music on a person's mental health. Interviews provide an updated record by looking at those that interacted with this culture. This offers a different perspective from other research on the topic as it is in hindsight. What was found during Chapter Two was consistently maintained. The gathered data was used to either support or disprove a hypothesis that music's effect on a person's state could be mathematically measured through a numerical scale. This scale is based on how music impacted people due to their state and risk factors as can be seen via mathematical formulae. Establishing facts via interviews and measuring against a mathematical system should help to direct how music is used for mood management and risk mitigation.

Regarding the mathematical scale, this is based on the research discussed in the Literature Review around peers having the highest influence, family being second highest, and celebrities being the lowest regarding mental health risk, beginning with -5 and ascending to the risk category of 5. A person living in perfect emotional balance would sit at risk number 0. The side of risk due to depression is 1 through 5, and the negative categories represent levels of elation leveling from categories -1 to -5. Similar to measurement tools such as the Patient Health Questionnaire-9,[74] risk factors are influenced thus: media influence would be plus or minus 1, family influence would be plus or minus 2, peer influence would be plus or minus 3, and finally, mental health, such as depression caused by chemical imbalance would contribute plus or minus 1 to 5. For example, a person that at a zero hears that their favorite artist committed suicide and participates in a peer group that actively engages in self-harm places this person at a 4 risk. This means something such as a death in the family or a song that is poetically expressing a want to end their life (though not the literal intent) could send a person into a suicidal state. A person that is seemingly oblivious to the plights of others, on the other hand sitting at a negative five, may find themselves more at balance by listening to emo/metal music that brings plights of existence to them, forcing a negative three and causing them to be more balanced.

The final part of this hypothesis is why people like sad music if the music is appropriate. This means a person at a 3-risk factor may benefit from music being cathartic or empathetic bringing them back to a factor of 2. However, a person at a 3.5 to 4 could be pushed to a higher risk factor if what would be cathartic now encourages an act of violence or self-harm. This

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[74] K. L. Smarr, "Measures of depression and depressive symptoms: Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II), Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D), Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS), Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS), and Patient Health Questionna," <u>Arthritis Care and Research</u> **63**(2011): 454-66.

means there is a primary scale and a secondary one. The primary being -5 to 5, and the secondary

being 3 to 4. 3 to 4 being where music can be cathartic from or emboldening towards violence.

Below (Table 1) is an example of the chart that would function to analyze the purpose of

music as will be shown in Chapter Four. This is a foundational example and is designed to be

developed beyond its current state through psychological research. The chart would start with an

X or check mark in whatever box a therapist would assign a person. This would work through

each category resulting in the effect of media. This study, primarily focused on emo and metal,

could be brought out further to other genres to demonstrate that what matters most is genre

preference over the genre itself having an effect.

Line of Risk	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
	Life in Danger	Danger	Considering Harm	Avoidant	Sociable	Balanced	Happy	Spirited	Joyful	Excited	Jubilant
Factors											
Mental health +/- 0-5											
Peers +/- 0-3											
Family +/- 0-2											
Media +/-1											
	Media will be +1 should the individual be 3.5/-3.5 or greater, -1 from 3 to -3										

Table 3.1 Table of Risk

As a musical artist and purveyor of both metal and emo music, this author's prior

experience contributes to firsthand knowledge. As an artist, writing music in these genres serves

as an emotional escape and camaraderie. With some knowledge being firsthand, this will help to

establish rapport with interviewees as well as help to direct questions around the interview. It is

the hope that the interviews will continue to prove this.

Thus, the thesis of the fieldwork is that music can serve as either cathartic or perpetrate

an act of harm. This is likely the case as media such as literature and country music have long

shown a reputation that reflects this hypothesis of media both helping and harming a person's

mental health. Similar results are expected from metal and emo. As mentioned in the Literature

Review whenever country listeners commit suicide there are normally outside factors and

trauma. These factors are often found sung about in country music and if the situation is bleak

enough, there could be a risk of someone taking their own life. Contrasting this, a person who is

in a similar situation but has not gone to a 4 or higher on the scale is less likely to take their own

life.

Fieldwork Procedures

Fieldwork conducted with interviewees must fit the following criteria: they must be born

between 1981 and 1996 and be familiar with these two genres. Race and gender are not a

requirement for the study. Interviews offer several benefits over surveys. For one, interviews are

personable. It is far more likely to get an accurate response by establishing some rapport with

participants than would be possible with a survey. LeCompte adds that surveys, "assess only

what people think, know, or report that they do at a specific point in time."[75] As emotions

normally exist and change across a period, and music alters these emotions over time. A

snapshot of a single moment is unlikely to gather accurate data. This is necessary to understand

the emotions behind the participants. Emo music specifically is noted as being based on personal

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[75] LeCompte and Schensul, "*Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research: An Introduction*," 100

emotions and expressing them as in Chapter 2. Using the ability to have recorded interviews and a more genuine connection for a topic focused on people's relationships with a genre can be cemented with more firsthand evidence.

Questions range from low risk such as "What drew you towards this genre," to high risk, such as "Did you or anyone you know engage in self-harm, and if so, do you feel the cultures of metal and emo enabled and encouraged." Questions will also expand into more specific: "Did you feel like either positive or negative experiences were more driven by the culture, or the music itself?" These questions function to support or contradict the research showing that the arts and celebrities pose a small impact on someone's life, relative to the influence of peers and family. One important note is that many of the topics, as the interview progresses, may touch on sensitive topics. Sensitive topics may include asking about loss, violence, and self-harm. To prevent risk from these sensitive topics a warning will be presented to the person before any questions proceed, prefacing potentially triggering questions with warnings about the topic to ensure the participant is comfortable with the line of questioning. These questions will work to establish data around music as a contributing factor. Questions may include but not be limited to:

- Did you or anyone you know commit acts of violence against either yourselves or others?
- Do you find that music would encourage you to act violently either towards yourself, others, or objects?
- If you did commit acts of violence and did so with music either before or during, what was your state of mind before any music was consumed?
- If so, did you feel it was driven by the surrounding culture?
- Do you feel acts of violence/self-harm were derived from musical inspiration?
- Do you feel any acts of violence/self-harm were done purely by the individual either yourself or others, regardless of external influence?

Following the interview, each participant will be offered a copy of the thesis before final release to ensure nothing is being published against their wishes. In addition, all details about the interviews and the interviewees themselves will be saved on an internal drive on the author's

main computer and password protected. Any other copies of the information that could be found through any cloud services will be copied to this drive and then deleted from their cloud copy. The only exception is a backup may be saved to a non-primary internal hard drive which will also be password protected to prevent data loss, ensuring the confidentiality of participants and the individuals.

Participants and Data Collection

The participants in the study are millennials who are familiar with the genres under research, each having directly participated as creators or consumers. The only demographic restriction would be age, as it is focused on those born between 1981 and 1996. Participants that do sign up will be warned that some questions relating to the genres and the community, as well as its results, may be triggering to certain events in their lives. Combining views from both the turn of the millennia and today, a clear comparison should be able to be made between what the impact was at the time, both positive and negative, and the positive as it is in the present era. This should be especially effective because there are causes and reasons for different relationships between these two genres. Participants will be able to provide appropriate data to assess the effects of metal and emo music on the millennial generation. Ranging to its cause for risk of violence, or mood management.

The method for data collection will be an audio recording of interviews. This will be done via recorded digital interviews using Zoom. Each interview was completed using identical questions though as with the benefit of interviews, all participants answered each question regardless of the topics triggering nature, or completely different answers. This is especially likely as a potential benefit of interviews over surveys. Having greater subtleties available may help to find more detail in collected data than in a survey. After all recorded interviews were

completed, they were secured on a separate hard drive that was password locked. Responses to each question will be cross-analyzed to find trends and outlying variables. This should lead to taking these trends and variables to be numerically analyzed to find consistent data. Placing both quotes and numerical data should help to give a clear image when combined with the literature review.

<div align="center">Project</div>

Overview of the Project Design

The project consists of four stages. First is participant acquisition, second is interviewing participants, third is an analysis of interviews, and the final stage is to take all analyzed data and compile that into a report. This report will be compared against the information found in the literature review to develop the conclusion. The goal is to search for a balance for both the positive and negative impacts of the music and surrounding culture on the individual, discovering the effect of metal and emo music on millennials in the United States.

Once participants, ideally twenty or more people, are gathered the interviews will be set up to gather information about whether emo and metal music create a violent or cathartic effect. The next phase analyzes outside factors affecting the results. Specifically related to peer and family relationships, and mental health at the time. These factors were established as the greatest contributing factors based on research found in chapter two. Each question will allow participants to answer honestly yet should be targeted enough to get data that can be compared and computed alongside other participants. This will work to reinforce or disprove the pendulum of risk. Should it remain proven, the pendulum will be the mathematical basis of analysis.

Ideally, between this and the literature review, a conclusion will be drawn that should give a clear picture of these genres' relationships with millennials, their use cases, and by further

extension in what way can be used. Giving insight into when something may be avoiding uncomfortable moments when a music may be inappropriate, or when it could make a situation potentially worse. This results in a person becoming a statistic where a stereotype of violence is fulfilled, with music to blame.

Relationship of the Literature to the Project Design

The scholarly literature will serve as the control against data collected during the interviews. The literature also will help drive the questions, as many questions have already been asked and answered in past research, testing to see if the results of the past are seen from decade to decade or any indication of change. In addition, the pendulum mentioned previously is based on observations from notes from the literature review. The goal of the pendulum is to find the likelihood of a music type being a risk or a benefit to a person.

Although it is not a perfect control, using the literature review as a control allows for a stable understanding of what is found. Certain factors have been established from Chapter Two, such as people liking sad music when it mirrors their emotional state. Music also fails to console a person if it does not reflect the situation. The highest influence especially regarding violence is driven highest by peers, second highest by family, and finally media. These genres have spawned both a means of coping with unfortunate events, while also establishing cliques that can work towards violence and manipulation.

Questions will be mostly to review previously established literature. Helping to establish people's connection with culture and music together. These elements worked to discover points when the music served as the listener, and times drove them to harm. There were also consistent elements between cathartic and violent responses. Finally, the most influential elements influence various conditions, confirming if it was driven by peers, family, or media. Using these

findings and then comparing them to the literature review will be the starting phase to establish

mathematical consistencies between them. After finding consistencies establishing variables

against the literature helps to find exceptions and at what rate exceptions take place. Comparing

the consistencies and exceptions, the literature review can serve as a control. This will help to

establish prior research and new data. New information may fuel future research. Giving future

uses and rise to understand a generation and one of its influential musical trends.

Project Plan and Implementation

The project plan will follow as such. First, data found in the literature review, as well as

further findings will be collected. This began with developing the research base by framing

questions, identifying the population, and finding the research site. From here, the process

involves deciding on research methods by developing a data collection plan, designing data

collection methods, and scheduling data collection activities. The following step will be to access

the field situation, develop human-subject guidelines, and determine data management and field

security procedures. After this, selecting data analysis procedures by developing a text coding

system, mapping the data, selecting procedures for analysis of survey data, and conceptualizing

triangulation strategies. Following these steps, the remaining tasks are to develop final

documents identifying the audiences, develop guidelines for participant involvement in the

presentation of results, and develop multiple audience-appropriate dissemination formats.

Concluding these steps involves determining dissemination procedures by identifying possible

sources of resistance and developing strategies for addressing resistance.[76] Certain steps have

been removed from the recommended list as they do not line up with the nature of this style of

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[76] LeCompte and Schensul, "*Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research: An Introduction*", 91

research. This consisted of data collection, content analysis, and ethnographic interview, followed by data collection, and dissemination.[77] The data collection rested primarily on the information found in Chapter Two with any necessary expansion to better create a foundation. Information from the literature will be subjected to content analysis to come to develop a conclusion. Next came the ethnographic interviews, giving us our variables of the document impact of metal and emo music from closer to the time of 2000-2010, to its status. Afterward, all the data will be collected and compiled to create a conclusion. Following this, there will be the dissemination of the data into a thesis format.

Project Implementation

It may be necessary to make modifications depending on the demographic that was able to be acquired for the interview. It may also become necessary to modify perspectives and end goals based on data throughout the process. Other modifications may become necessary as the project continues, and it will be important to document each change in a separate log.

Conclusion

It was the goal of this research, when compared against the literature review to compare results over time, developing a means of seeing where the risk lies within music that is typically deemed violent. Where does cathartic become dangerous, and when should music be used to be cathartic for the listener? If the music made this culture, then it is safe to see the culture as a self-sustaining machine. Violent imagery and poetry develop a sub-culture where this is viewed as literal and acceptable behavior. The sales and reception of such music would help to push the creation of more music along these lines, and from these cultures, other musicians and lyricists

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[77] Ibid. 175-179

would arise, feeding back into the musical culture, which would feed back into emo/metal culture. This self-sustaining cycle would create this sub-culture within it where what has been decided as a negative reaction to the art and music would be viewed as acceptable. Implicitly using music as mood management as well as the risk of using it to accept violent behaviors. Measuring all of this establishes a mathematical means of disseminating data to readers, establishing variables, and using these points to give guidance to establish the harmful and beneficial relationship between metal and emo for millennials.

Chapter 4: Research Project Findings

To focus on individual experiences, interviews are broken into three separate parts. Each interviewee is identified with a letter. The goal of this chapter is to distill the data gathered and translate the responses into a numeric format, restating the necessity of interviews over surveys for this topic, discuss any limitations found throughout the research itself, address the benefits this research could have for future projects, and finally, to establish the conclusion of the research in comparison with the literature review in the concluding chapter.

The first part centered on individual demographics. Part two engaged with participants' experience with metal and emo music. Part three concentrated on the participants' knowledge of violent reactions to the music. Demographics include age, financial status, location in the United States, music listened to, participation with said music, and friend group: first, defining the participant by ensuring a large area of the country is being investigated; second, to see if metal and emo music were a part of their lives and if so to what level or degree they engage with either or both genres; third, to know if they were a consumer and or creator of the genre (artists may often have a unique perspective on the creation of music for their audience); and finally, the friend group that they would engage in. As mentioned in Chapter Two there is a correlation between peer influence and decision-making. Of the different categories mentioned in the research peers are stated as the highest order of influence on the average adolescent.

The second part focuses on the participants' relationship with the musics. The time that the music is chosen was important for several factors. Positively speaking it could be a means of catharsis or a means of focus. The negative potential here would be if there were violent actions taken the music listened to increases the motivation to partake in harmful behavior. Damaging actions are seen throughout the literature review between the Werther effect, country music, and

beliefs about these two genres. Metal and emo were selected as the objects of this study to understand what made these genres unique from the experiences of other genres. Increased focus and memory recollection was believed to be unique to Mozart's music. However as found in Chapter Two, it was more of a reaction to a music of preference. Thus, it was the goal of these interviews to understand what made these genres the music of preference. The final part covers potentially traumatic events. Each participant was warned before the interview, and before this section started, that triggering questions may be asked. Additionally, if at any moment in time, they needed the interview to stop, it would be stopped. The questions around part three focus on whether metal or emo music encouraged participants or people they knew to act violently, and what drove such a response: the culture, the music, or an individual.

<div align="center">Part 1</div>

Demographic Data

The demographic, as stated in the previous chapter, is for those born between 1981 and 1996, informally known as the millennial generation. Although answers varied, the majority set the time that this study focuses on between 2000-2010 as a family that was typically a middle class with some exceptions. Each participant had a unique financial position. Some are less financially affluent beginning in early childhood. Others have a consistent financial status throughout their childhood and adolescence. By the time the participants were in high school most seemed to share similar financial status. The regions did vary between the West Coast, Midwest, and Southeastern United States. There was very little ethnic diversity, however, it is important to note that ethnic background was not a qualifying factor for this research. Consistent data showed very little difference between participants. The lack of variance helped to establish

that, even with the limited number of participants, and their widespread locations in the United States, the responses demonstrated consistent trends.

Music Listened To

Researching millennials' relationship to emo and metal showed some variation among participants. Most shared a link to the music they were exposed to through their parents. A parental musical link was consistent between each participant, though the genre varied in origin, ranging from Christian praise and worship to disco, and pop. Introductions to metal or emo were either from older siblings or friends. These two categories since the age differences were close would place closer to the category of peer. It is important to note that peer influence was the highest influence category regarding self-harm in the findings of Chapter Two and the Scale of Risk proposed in Chapter Three. In the musical selection, the individuals that listened to emo tended to listen to metal as well, whereas the individuals that listened to metal primarily did not engage in emo culture. It is important to note that those that preferred metal tended to listen to both older and younger groups, differing from emo, which was believed to have originated in the 1980s. Music mentioned by participants was released in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. seeming to show a lack of interest in the genre's historical background and giving an interesting historical context to data.

Participation in the musics

Half of the participants who both played and listened to metal or emo primarily listened during their formative years and developed their performance of it into early college. The participants that played music during high school preferred to play metal. A participant in the interviews did begin playing music after high school. All participants felt that metal and emo music provided an outlet for their emotions. Being aggressive helped give energy and focus

according to interviewees. These statements applied regardless of the participant creating or intaking the music itself. Writing the music would help to give focus and intellectual engagement, as well as listening. Writing the music helped to give catharsis and focus on the midst of various life occurrences. When participants talked about listening to metal or emo, they said helped them to feel involved in society and/or more focused in activities in which they were engaged.

Friend Group

Each participant had a different definition of their friend group which could be summarized under the term amorphous, tending to be less socially involved in specific cliques that might be found in formative years and leaning more towards the idea of spending time with those that they found relatable. These cliques included music which would help form relationships between people to the point that one participant remains in the band that he helped to found in high school. Participants expressed that their friend groups existed to relate alongside. These friend groups seemed to be seen across the field as supportive areas in their life. Peers helped to cement that of the varying influencing factors found that peer groups have the most direct influence on a person over family or media. Although the media may have been a binding factor, participants connected with people that would listen to similar music and found it to be an uplifting experience.

Part 2

Time When Metal and Emo Were Consumed Most.

Each participant stated that the music was chosen for focus, catharsis, and energy. Individuals stated that they would listen to it to focus on projects and schoolwork or in other

parts of their daily life, using high-energy music to help give focus, especially in scenarios where distractions could be frequent. These genres help to create a positive noise tunnel that would provide focus. Metal and emo also gave a sense of catharsis for frustrations and anxiety about each person's life, giving an outlet where individuals expressing these emotions felt as though they were not alone. Whereas all music can help with mood management, when a mood could be driven by loneliness or anger participants stated that emo and metal music helped them to focus those feelings. A term that was mentioned by nearly every participant was energy. Metal and emo music both would give participants an energy that they stated was not found in other genres.

Why That Music?

As an extension to the previous question, the following question concerned why participants gravitated to metal and/or emo music as opposed to other genres. Most of the participants in the survey listened to music they were introduced to by family and other friends that were neither of these genres. Emo and metal music both offered an escape from feelings of loneliness. Individuals participating in the interviews consistently reported a reason for listening to these two genres of music: serving as a cathartic solution to any negative feelings and aiding in mood management. There is also evidence that shows the genre of music is unrelated to a person's ability to focus. An added reason these musics were chosen by each participant was the energy it provided as opposed to other genres. It is both technical and raw, offering the benefit of leaving the listeners not only focused on other genres but also energized while listening to them.

How Did the Music Make the Person Feel?

Participants said these genres made them feel energized, focused, and not alone. Metal and emo both give a musical energy either empathetically or externally helping to elevate their energy and focus. There was consistent mention across the study of feeling not alone among

participants. Where many stereotypes encountered by individuals would make it seem as though the opposite was the case, both genres resonated with participants, breaking down isolation. The sensation of aggressive music and lyrics that poetically cut to the core worked in the favor of participants in daily life.

Is It Still Something Listened To?

Each participant mentioned that they all still listened to emo and metal, and three of the four currently create music in these genres. Furthermore, it is something they all see as a positive element in their life, either because it helps them focus through work in the face of challenges, or because it gives them the energy to get through a day. Finally, it is useful still for them to find it as a means and form of expression between themselves and the music itself.

Part 3

Did Metal and Emo Encourage You or Others You Know to Act Violently Either Towards Yourself, Others, or Objects?

Answers around metal and emo encouraging violence varied heavily. Though each participant never felt that these genres were responsible for their behavior. Participant A mentioned that they knew of an individual who perhaps may have been influenced negatively. The difference was that the social circle was surrounded by also encouraged irresponsible behavior. That group in their school seems to be the exception to the rule of most listeners. Another case mentioned seemed to be purely driven by mental health concerns and not the music itself. Although little detail was known about the specifics, the event came as a shock.

If So, Did You Feel Like It Was Culture Driven?

As stated in the previous paragraph based on the descriptions from participants, only one indicated that someone who he knew listened to that music was influenced to make at the very least irresponsible choices. Furthermore, indicated that they were influenced heavily by their peers. Thus, in the reports between the four it seemed to have been a social microcosm that drove reckless action rather than something culture-wide.

Do you feel as though violent acts were musically inspired?

Each participant stated that they did not. Any violence that seemed to occur was driven by culture or mental health concerns. Further, each stated that emo and metal both helped them to feel connected with others, giving catharsis to the battles during coming of age.

Do you feel any acts of violence/self-harm were done on an individual basis?

Participant C stated that they did have a friend where self-harm was acted on an individual basis, relating that the friend did this as a reaction to a mental health condition. Participant C stated the friend seemed to be the happiest person in the crowd. As their friend showed no signs of depression, the act was unfortunately not predicted by others around Participant C's friend. Although individuals previously mentioned in the microcosm engaging in reckless behavior could fall under individual basis, the power of peer influence is something seen in both the positive and the negative.

Table of Risk

Chart Showing Metal and Emo's Musical Affect

Through interviews, there was consistent mention of metal and emo music both creating a cathartic, energizing, or focusing effect. Exceptions did exist, as one participant mentioned having an acquaintance who did engage in violent behavior. They clarified that the peer group

that surrounded them also partook in it. For this reason, peers will be reviewed later. The
following charts display examples of charts that will change depending on the level of the prior
risk.

Table 4.1's example is based on a risk factor of no higher than three. In these instances,
metal and emo music function as catharsis. Media lowers the risk factor from 3 to 2, although not
shown as it was not mentioned in the interviews. It is the perspective of the following chart that
media could work on the negative end of the risk factor. A person at a -2 risk factor may press
towards -3, while a person of -4 may change them to -3 as the lyrics may function as a source of
grounding.

Line of Risk	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
	Life in Danger	Danger	Considering Harm	Avoidant	Sociable	Balanced	Happy	Spirited	Joyful	Excited	Jubilant
Mental health +/- 1-5			X								
Media +/- 1				X							

Table 4.1 Table of Risk Positive Media Impact

In the case of a person being over a level 3 risk factor when metal and emo music is
applied, the music runs the risk of fueling the fire toward a risk factor of 5. This is based on the
research found on country music and its tendency to push individuals towards suicidal tendencies
only when several other life factors would impact them in a dangerous state. It is in this instance
that the music becomes less cathartic, and the darker themes come across more as an
endorsement.

Line of Risk	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
	Life in Danger	Danger	Considering Harm	Avoidant	Sociable	Balanced	Happy	Spirited	Joyful	Excited	Jubilant
Mental health +/- 1-5		X									
Media +/- 1	X										

Table 4.2 Table of Risk Negative Media Impact

Chart Showing Family Impact

Family is likely to have an impact of 0 to 2 based on the research found in the literature review. This mathematical conversion can be seen as each participant had varying upbringings and much-experienced loneliness. Yet none of the participants mentioned suicide in their family or abusive behavior. As such the impact would be fairly minimal, and music would be capable of adjusting for this. Unlike media, it does not rely on a side of the chart to have a positive or negative impact. Only the relationship between the individual and their direct family. This is represented by Table 4.3 showing a reduction in the risk factor by 2 bringing the risk factor to 3. This is important as it brings the individual to a place where metal and emo would be re-established as a cathartic effect.

Line of Risk	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
	Life in Danger	Danger	Considering Harm	Avoidant	Sociable	Balanced	Happy	Spirited	Joyful	Excited	Jubilant
Mental health +/- 1-5	X										
Family +/- 0-2			X								

Table 4.3 Table of Risk Family Impact

Chart Showing Peer Impact

The most influential group is based on previously reviewed research. Peers can either impact a positive or negative factor. As mentioned, when discussing the media's influence, the moments that any behavior of a dangerous nature was engaged in with cliques that tended to lean towards metal and emo music the clique itself was already likely to engage in it, demonstrating that peers have an impact of +/- 0-3 on the individual. In each interview, the participants spoke highly of their direct friend group, either as individuals that they were able to simply live life or, extending into lifetime impressions that continue to their present day.

Below are two charts demonstrating the aforementioned phenomenon. Table 4.4 shows, where peers demonstrate a negative impact on a person. As mentioned in one of the interviews, a peer they knew was associated with a group of individuals that were less than productive. As such negative peer influence would increase their risk from 1 to 4. At this stage, a person would be comfortable with causing harm to others or potentially themselves.

Table 4.5 is based on the third participant who stated that their peer group came about as part of interacting with metal music with one another. Both as listeners and creators, their peer

group was considered a highly positive influence. Based on these statements, though their mental health might have them considering harm on their own, it would bring them to a more balanced state due to positive peer influence working to establish a person's final state to see the effect that the media of choice, in this case, metal and emo, would have.

Line of Risk	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
	Life in Danger	Danger	Considering Harm	Avoidant	Sociable	Balanced	Happy	Spirited	Joyful	Excited	Jubilant
Mental health +/- 0-5					X						
Peers +/- 0-3		X									

Table 4.4 Table of Risk Negative Peer Influence

Line of Risk	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
	Life in Danger	Danger	Considering Harm	Avoidant	Sociable	Balanced	Happy	Spirited	Joyful	Excited	Jubilant
Mental health +/- 0-5			X								
Peers +/- 0-3						X					

Table 4.5 Table of Risk Positive Peer Influence

After viewing the direct influence of peers, there are two example tables of evaluation based on established factors. The first chart demonstrates metal and emo music helping the individual when read as seeing a person's mental health sitting at a risk factor of 3. When a positive relationship is held with their peers, this reduces their risk factor to 1. Yet in the

following example, the individual seems to have an unhealthy family increasing their risk factor

to 3. As stated previously, however, the individual is not above a risk factor of three, and as such

the media of their preference lowers their risk factor to 2.

Line of Risk	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
	Life in Danger	Danger	Considering Harm	Avoidant	Sociable	Balanced	Happy	Spirited	Joyful	Excited	Jubilant
Mental health +/- 0-5			X								
Peers +/- 0-3					X						
Family +/- 0-2			X								
Media +/-1				X							
	Media will be +1 should the individual be 3.5/-3.5 or greater, -1 from 3 to -3										

Table 4.6 Table of Risk Positive Impact

Table 4.7 shows an example of media being a disservice to the individual. In this case,

their mental health is already in a very dangerous place. Although their peer group functions as a

positive influence bringing them from a risk factor of 5 to 2, the negative family dynamic impact

brings them back to a risk factor of 4. The number 4 is important in this case as research and

theory show that, in any risk case above a 3, cathartic media is more likely to encourage

violence. At this point metal and or emo music will, unfortunately, function more as fuel toward

a negative scenario.

Line of Risk	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
	Life in Danger	Danger	Considering Harm	Avoidant	Sociable	Balanced	Happy	Spirited	Joyful	Excited	Jubilant
Mental health +/- 0-5	X										
Peers +/- 0-3				X							
Family +/- 0-2		X									
Media +/-1	X										
	Media will be +1 should the individual be 3.5/-3.5 or greater, -1 from 3 to -3										

Table 4.7 Table of Risk Negative Impact

Each of these tables will differ depending on the person. These numbers are believed to respond similarly to the negative end of the risk factor. A jubilant person at a negative 5 may be unaware of the struggles faced by others and could be brought closer to 0 through metal and emo. They may also respond to these genres where they do not notice the lyrics and find themselves further elevated, similar to how a person with a risk factor higher than three may result from the music intensifying the risk of violent action. The contrast is that they may become less approachable to people that sit closer to zero. These charts are based on the previously mentioned research in Chapter Two, narrowing down the factors showing why the responses in each interview would reflect as expressed by the participants.

Limitations

The largest cause resulting in a limited number of participants is a term known as survey fatigue. In recent years surveys have become part of everyday life, many of them trivial, some far less so. Thus, any kind of research is perceived similarly by the public, even when it is interview based. In addition to this, the interview does have the likelihood of recalling past trauma, either witnessed or experienced. As such, without financial incentives, it can be difficult to have people desire to recall traumatic experiences. A completely justifiable reason that does cause limitations. Especially as survivors of tragedies may not wish to recall them.

These limitations exist and can be adapted. Many of the interview-based research projects that provided themselves as sources for this research rarely had a large participant base, versus survey-based research. Normally focusing on less than ten subjects, the projects that predate this one shows the quality of in-person interviews struggles to show widespread data points while offering deeper core information. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the choice behind interviews was to get a better picture of the relationship between millennials and metal and emo music, two prominent genres with some crossovers. It is also important to note that each participant had similar data points regarding their position on each topic. These consistencies lend themselves to be core trends, with outlying data to be found more so in other literature.

Regarding traumatic relationships between people and these genres causing limitations, there is a substantial amount of research that has been done on these topics throughout history, and points provided consistently in the interviews give credibility to that literature. Even though there is a trigger warning and plenty of notice and permission for participants to cease the interview at any time, it can still be traumatic to recall morbid instances. This is again overcome by the many

consistencies between the research in the literature review and the responses consistently given in the interviews themselves.

Mental Health

The category that was not discussed was a person's mental health status due to mental health status requiring evaluation from a mental health professional. A person may be in excellent mental health or disguising their current condition. This factor was addressed by Participant C who stated they had had a friend who had fallen into depression, but the individual had previously shown no severe signs of depression. Based on this, their internal mental health status was a factor. These tragedies existing outside of metal or emo music are necessary as part of the calculation, as mental health is still a factor in the final number.

How this research could benefit future projects

This research functions to establish a mathematical basis upon which social science can observe the impact music has on individuals. Building from this thesis' research can be expanded to continue to spread throughout generations and genres. It will give credence to expressing metal and emo as potentially positive elements on a person, even if the lyrical topics are frequently negative. Using this knowledge of how darker media are useful for catharsis in the correct situation will give room for psychological research on music as a means of cognitive behavioral therapy methods. While breathing techniques are effective, an intake identifying a person's music of preference could help to establish what music genres should be part of their process.

Developing upon the mathematical basis, the research done could help establish a further mathematical understanding of the circumstances of individuals. While thorough logic can be explained, using a numerical system helps to establish an objective understanding of a scenario.

It also opens up the door for mathematicians and social scientists to work together to create variable formulas, finding nuance in further analysis of culture and music.

Situations, where the individual could be on the negative side, do not reflect a status of mania for this research. It is made to reflect a person of such a low risk it would take a considerable number of factors to place them in the positive. Yet mania could be a potential piece to analyze for future projects. The literature and interviews, however, both indicated that media and music tend to have less of an impact on a person suffering from mania. These limitations are likely due to limitations of research on music and its impact on the manic portion of manic-depressive disorders.

For future ethnomusicological projects, it will help to give a record from the perspective of hindsight from individuals that enjoy these genres of music. From this research, a larger project could be developed to test a smaller or larger group. A larger project would likely reveal more data if initiated from a localized area. Although the internet is a powerful tool for both education and research, the rapport that is established between individuals can often come with greater ease. With a larger base, the data found here could be expected to solidify theories established or find new findings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, metal and emo were used for a purpose. These genres specifically state the realities of life, whatever those realities are. Participants found these statements of reality, no matter how poetic, to give a sense of belonging. As an extension of the theory in one of the sources *Why Do People Like Sad Music,* metal and emo music exist as a source of catharsis. Music serving an empathetic purpose exists despite aggressive lyrics or musical tones being used. The results from the interviews showed that pitches, rhythms, and even lyrics are often

interpreted with a constructive understanding. Metal and emo were found to give millennials within the United States focus, a sense of belonging, catharsis, and energy, as it helped to develop an identity apart from music, enjoyed due to their relationship with their parental figures. The culture inside of it is not without flaws. A subset of emo and metal culture points to moments of encouraging reckless acts, and violent behavior. The violent subset, however, was largely dictated by peer groups. Some perhaps misunderstand the poetic intent of the music or simply wish to engage in violent behavior. This works to confirm findings in Chapter Two regarding what drives suicidal behavior. Similar findings were brought forth during the interviews regarding all negative behavior. The interviews ultimately concluded that harmful behavior was often encouraged or inspired by peer groups. The only exception to peer influence is an individual's mental health.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

How emo and metal music affected millennials in the United States can be seen on two sides of the same coin. One side says that it served as an aid for millennials during their coming of age. The alternative states that metal and emo encouraged misogyny, self-harm, and violence. Research focusing on these genres, as well as historically similar genres, demonstrates their effects. Historically, similar genres including country music, classical music, and even literature provided further information necessary to develop questions for the research itself. Based on the findings in the literature review it became clear that there was both an element of benefit and harm to the music. Furthermore, it behaved similarly to the other genres during a historical review. Identifying the existence of both harm and benefit from metal and emo, the follow-up to achieve the objectives of this research is establishing millennials' relationship with metal and emo music. To get a modern perspective a select number of individuals were selected to participate in a series of interview questions. These questions also served to prove a theory about the factors where the relationship would become a harmful one. Finally, interviewing selects individuals that fit within the demographic to ascertain a first-person perspective. It is the goal of the findings of this paper to show the impact these genres had on a generation during its formative years.

Metal and emo's relationship is understood by the literature. Metal and emo are two genres that, though different share elements with one another. The literature around this states that it had both a positive and negative relationship. On the positive, it suggests that these genres provided an escape, a form of sympathy and catharsis for the listeners of this music, often listened to by individuals in the middle class that felt left out. They both shared aggressive

themes, often using violently poetic imagery to describe anything from a person they were in love with, to a depiction of tragic events. These themes were unfortunately taken more literally by some. Cliques arose within the communities where violent behavior was more accepted. Negative responses could continue where to avoid stereotypes about gender individuals' men would use their vulnerability as a means of manipulating their partners. Acts of cutting were used as a means of emotional release, or as suicide attempts.

Emo and metal serve a similar function as seen with what is considered sad music or literature. Both often borrow from similar literary sources and storytelling means. From the musical standpoint, a great deal of research has been done into why people often prefer sad music over happy music all the time. A nocturne may fit someone's preference one day, and a waltz another, this preference comes as people tend to prefer a music that is empathetic to their current state. Beethoven's Ecossaise would be considered in poor taste at a funeral. Similarly, a lyrically and musically jovial tune when someone feels lonely may not have the desired effect. Based on this research it could intensify a sense of loneliness for the individual instead of creating a sense of joy. By the same logic, a melancholic or depressed state creates a want for sad music that resonates with us as individuals. The darker side of the coin is something more documented in country music. This gives rise to the research questions in the third chapter. What has been found is that for those that would engage with country music concerning a suicide attempt are that many factors in their life were similar to the circumstances they were experiencing. Instead of being the salve necessary for easing the pain, the situation would be in such a strait that the individual would instead see it as fuel on an already burning fire, resulting in the final step being taken. As there remains a population of country music listeners it is obvious that the music itself does not cause suicide or there would be a widespread case of

suicide throughout much of the world that listens to country music. This led to a deeper historical investigation into a piece of famous literature for more information, The Sorrows of Young Werther. The Werther Effect came to be known after individuals read this piece of literature, and then imitated the suicide taken by the main character to near cultish levels, including traveling to the same iconic places wearing the costume of the characters themselves. Of course, not all readers would commit suicide, but those that did would do so in as identical fashion as possible. Yet the number of suicides throughout Europe led to the book being banned in many countries. What is documented is that Goethe wrote the book as he went through a time in his life when he also had dark thoughts. The book served as a means of catharsis and, given the success of its sales, it likely did the same for many others. Unfortunately, enough people were close enough to the edge to take text meant to serve as a means of working through heartbreak and depression and using it in the middle of their depression as a guide to follow. If one person is on a journey, they are likely to attract others through some means, creating either direct peers or those that see themselves as peers, and thus making the behavior more acceptable, leading to a near epidemic that was severe enough for the banning of the book.

Researching these other genres led to new research discussing the relationship people have with self-harm and violence. People often engage in violent behavior, especially suicide, when connected to three parts outside of mental health. The greatest factor was that of peers, the second was family, and finally media. That research helped to specify how metal and emo affected millennials. These three parts would also help to develop the questions for the research project. This is where an attempt will be made to connect the various threads into a cohesive theory based on the literature.

Emo and metal serve a cathartic function. They work to help to create community, offer empathy in a state of loneliness, energy when lethargy takes over, and focus when tasks abound. They do so by using their aggressive natures. Pushing individuals to have a space to express emotions. Having a space to express aggressive emotions can turn sour when exposed to many external elements, as found with results behind country a person is more likely to commit an act of self-harm or violence when they need a nudge to self-destruct. Entropy on the personal level is driven by a person's mental state, peers, and family. Finally, if a great enough risk a form of media can push them over. In this instance a person's relationship with emo and metal transfers from catharsis to entropic. It is in the entropic that research has been committed to understanding if the music is in and of itself harmful, yet this media and others potentially are not harmful within themselves without a far greater amount of interaction. Based on this conclusion one thing was left, to prove this mathematically, and to interview others to determine if what could be understood from Chapter Two is consistent with any interviews.

The thesis behind the research, in a similar way that a person can be evaluated for depression and anxiety, is that the cathartic effect of emo and metal could be calculated to see when that effect could sour. This could be more widely applied. However, for this study, these genres shall be only discussed. The findings of the interview were as expected and fell under the findings of the literature review. Each participant stated their relationship with emo and metal and music, while the specifics of which genre they preferred varied, the responses were very similar. Each participant stated that the music helped them to feel less alone. Some mentioned its ability to help them focus, and others mentioned that its energy was cathartic and empowering. Those that knew individuals that engaged in any kind of harmful act felt music was not responsible. Relating to either a mental illness or their peer group. Confirming that mental health

as a factor would impact individuals regardless of other situations. Peers, however, were able to be observed and thus the person most likely to engage in harmful behavior would do so with the encouragement of those around them. Permission and encouragement from peers are important as though they listened to these genres, those that observed peer influence and friend groups did not engage, also listened to these same genres. Thus, the media was not the factor in harmful behavior. Helping to establish that peer influence over media drives a person's behavior.

These findings helped to cement the basis of the findings and proved what was found in the literature review. These genres and other media can be the means that push a person over the edge. Yet, as a whole, they function as a means of mood management, well-being, and decreasing loneliness through lyrics or community. When they do cause an individual to engage in violent behavior there are likely other factors with greater contribution: mental health, peers, and/or family. Knowing the levels of influence from each group gives a mathematical solution to express the point at which media becomes harmful. A person at 0 on a scale of -5 to 5 is likely a very balanced individual. If a person has a very positive family relationship, they now sit at a -2 risk factor. However, with destructive peers they get +3 added bringing them to 1. With cathartic music that helps them in moments where they feel moments of loneliness, they are brought back to zero as something gives them catharsis. This mathematical approach shows millennials' relationship with metal and emo.

This research is significant as it can help future research. Any findings in this thesis could be expanded to help to build action plans and cognitive behavioral therapy methods. It could also be used to help solve questions as old as the legendary Werther Effect. This could help to use music as an effective tool for people, remove stereotypes around certain music types and help individuals to develop their understanding to best help themselves and others. For individuals,

this research is especially helpful as it allows people, including friends and family to see when a music will be of benefit. If a person finds themselves or peers in a downward state it is important to know that the music that they gravitate and relate to will provide far more benefit than a genre with a very different mood. As found in the literature review, that does not identify with an individual's state increases a feeling of isolation.

The second benefit of this research is maintaining a record. An important element throughout ethnomusicological research is historical data, viewing relationships with local music both in the present and in hindsight. During the time spent on the literature review most of the research found started five or more years ago. Although not a very large period, it is important to keep an updated record. As stated in Chapter Two there have been media in a similar format dating incredibly far back. One could argue that the Devil's Trill violin sonata by Giuseppe Tartini could even be included as a Baroque analogue to metal. For this reason, it is important as both metal and emo bands continue to create music to keep a record from the beginning of the 21st century, especially as these genres continue to exist today and be engaged across generations.

During the study of similar genres of media throughout history there can be found instances of what seem to be pandemic levels of violence. The research first showed this regarding *The Sorrows of Young Werther.* Many people after reading the book would follow around the moments in a cult-like following. Those that seemed to wish to end their own lives would do so in a similar fashion. Based on the findings in Chapters Two and Four it is likely these individuals were already in a place of mental strain. If the book was what became a source of encouragement towards violence instead of catharsis, then it is likely based on the research in this paper that there were outstanding factors. The media itself was the proverbial needle on the

metaphorical camel's back. As these acts were associated though through the cult-like following of the book it may have been seen as easier to blame the text than investigate a large swath of people's mental conditions. Thus, banning certain media may have left or may have caused some suicides to be unnoticed as they were less likely to be associated with a cult following. Based on these findings may help to drive a review of violent pandemics linked to the media. Hopefully avoiding the censorship of art, and thus freedom of speech due to a misinterpretation of the intended purpose. When it could be more likely that a sub-faction of those engaging in the art is far more driven by a small portion of peers that either misunderstood or were in such a place that it was an accelerant instead of a deterrent to any declining mental health.

Regarding the combined limitations of the study. The primary limitation is the age of these two genres. Emo is previously stated as not being older than forty years. Compared to traditional music from South India which has records of the oldest methods of musical transcription known to mankind there will be a difference in the available literature on the discussion. Combined with the age of the genres is the sparse amount of research that has been completed in these genres and ethnic categories. Compared to regions and older musics there is a logical lack of research due to the music's creation and rise to mainstream culture within the United States.

For the participants, the two main limitations were a lack of funds to offer participants. Post the COVID pandemic, many people are precious with their time. Upon inquiring on an individual basis, the lack of participant funding became a common reason for a lack of participation. Another element is survey fatigue. Due to an excessive number of surveys, individuals were reluctant to participate. Many people do not want to take the time to answer a list of questions, either survey or interview regardless of the outcome. A final piece was the lack

of the study being attached to a local physical facility. As an online student, there are always limitations from posting on school bulletins or reaching out to large numbers of fellow students to help in recruiting for a study. Compounded to the lack of physical areas for recruitment the basis of focus of the study is millennials, many of whom are in their late twenties to early forties with full-time jobs, families, and responsibilities.

Recommended research could focus on further record-keeping. It would be potentially more beneficial to focus on the part of the research that was less expected in the initial thesis. That is the research into the music and its relationship with people's mental health. It is likely that with large enough studies, the findings here could be cemented and questions that were found throughout, even going back to research around the Werther effect could be resolved. Making an entire period and generation and people that see music as a tool and means. When mental health is tied to a form of media instead of the media being addressed, seeking out what is happening between the members of the peer group could perhaps work to save lives. It could also help to encourage therapists to figure out the best means of cognitive behavioral therapy. The potential with PTSD, depression, or anxiety may find unexpected positive results that would define stereotypes. With greater importance, the findings of a larger study with financial backing could present data in a way that the average person would be able to adapt, interpret, and use the findings in their daily lives. Both for themselves and others. Using music similar to My Chemical Romance or Metallica to help someone in a darker-than-usual place, as participants in my research said, helped remove a sense of loneliness people's lives could be saved. As stated in James 2:15-16 "If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed, and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?" A person's state of being similar to being warm and filled, it could be

argued that if the church could use this research to help a person in the depths of mental depression, the previous statement from James could be observed. As their mind and body are whole so now their spirit is capable of being whole.

In pursuit of trying to find the relationship a generation shared with a genre of music several added questions were added. Revealing questions, and considerations. The relationship that was shared by these individuals was dual. For the vast majority, it was a means of not feeling alone. It was a source of focus and a way to healthily deal with the struggles associated with coming of age. Due to misinterpretation, mental health, and peers a subset of metal and emo culture took aggressive imagery literally. Darker themes as a form of catharsis have been through history. Though it could be debated that, like with reports on violent crimes, these genres of music should be censored, this study found that the vast majority of individuals found it as an artistic place of solace.

Metal and emo music in its dark and aggressive themes gave a means of expression that would not have existed otherwise. Furthermore, there has always been a need for such art. Either from the artist or society. The Sorrows of Young Werther, many of the sit-com monster shows in the early and mid-twentieth century, and Symphony Fantastique by Berlioz range on the list. These existed not as a means of pouring darkness into a bright world. Instead, acknowledge the existence of darkness and give a place where people could as written in Ephesians 4:26a "be angry but do not sin." The relationship was largely that of a people seeking expression and community.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Table of Risk

Line of Risk	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
	Life in Danger	Danger	Considering Harm	Avoidant	Sociable	Balanced	Happy	Spirited	Joyful	Excited	Jubilant
Mental health +/- 0-5											
Peers +/- 0-3											
Family +/- 0-2											
Media +/-1											
	Media will be +1 should the individual be 3.5/-3.5 or greater, -1 from 3 to -3										

Appendix B

Participant labels for interviews:

- Participant A
- Participant B
- Participant C
- Participant D