Individual Thought Patterns: Women in New York's Extreme Metal Music Scene

Joan M. Jocson-Singh
CUNY Hunter College

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!
Follow this and additional works at: http://academicworks.cuny.edu/hc_sas_etds
Part of the Ethnomusicology Commons, Other Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons, Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons, and the Women's Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
http://academicworks.cuny.edu/hc_sas_etds/134

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Hunter College at CUNY Academic Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Arts & Sciences Theses by an authorized administrator of CUNY Academic Works. For more information, please contact AcademicWorks@cuny.edu.
Individual Thought Patterns: Women in New York's Extreme Metal Music Scene

by

Joan Jocson-Singh

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts Anthropology, Hunter College
The City University of New York

2016

Thesis Sponsor:

Dr. Jonathan Shannon
October 2, 2016
Date
Signature of First Reader

Dr. Aminata Maraesa
October 2, 2016
Date
Signature of Second Reader
Extreme metal music (EMM) is both an umbrella term and a sub-category of heavy metal, with origins in the early 1980s. It is a complex amplification of heavy metal that has garnered increased attention during the last two decades due to some bands becoming more popular and accessible than anticipated for the styles it comprises. Although women have a small but steady presence in heavy metal, this number shrinks when applied to extreme metal - a subculture which has typically been coded as a masculine domain (Purcell 2003; Kahn-Harris 2007; Walser 1993; Weinstein 1991).

For women, participating in such an overwhelmingly male-coded environment can incur sexism, marginalization, and misogyny. This begs the question: Why and how do women participate in a genre so often considered to be a man’s domain?

By use of ethnographic research, participant observation and interviews, this study surveys female participants (fans, musicians, and music industry workers) in the New York Tri-state area involved in the EMM scene to address the common identity markers for women in the scene, regional comparisons from previous studies with regard to ethnicity, age, and education, and the ways in which their behaviors intersect with gender performativity and feminist musicology. Exploration of themes of embodiment and performativity will reveal how gender and agency play a role in women’s consumption and production practices within the EMM scene in New York.

Keywords:
Extreme Metal Music, Gender, Performativity, Ethnography, Agency, Feminism and Vigilante Feminism
The title of my thesis, Individual Thought Patterns, references the name of the title track and 1993 album by the metal band Death. Founded by guitarist and vocalist Chuck Shuldiner, Death is known as one of the most influential bands in metal and is often credited with having created the death metal music genre. This album, in particular, explores and criticizes philosophical and social norms in Western society. Shuldiner’s writings challenge and expose marginalized aspects of the human condition while highlighting agency and truth for voices that often go unheard.

I reference this album as it explores feelings of alienation, difference, and what Shuldiner seemingly understood to be a voice for the marginalized. In this sense, the concepts put forth in Individual Thought Patterns correlate with women’s participation in extreme metal and express the disquietude of an unheard voice often suppressed by patriarchy. In essence, women, like men, are individuals whose own theoretical and social struggles can offer insights about feelings and realities so often discarded by society at large. While extreme metal has often been castigated by popular media for being a genre of misanthropy, sexism and violence, the same repressive themes can work to empower women who transgress and find a place of liminality while participating and performing in the subculture. As a result, it offers a lens through which one can look beyond the traditional perceptions of the genre and instead reveal a human experience and threshold from which women can emerge empowered.
Acknowledgments

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my husband, Vish Singh, who, many years ago, introduced me to the music of Crisis, Death, and Carcass. It took me an additional 10 years and some life experiences to really learn to appreciate the nuances of death metal, but I am forever changed for it. Thank you for your encouragement and support!

Thank you to my colleagues and peers from the International Society for Metal Music Studies (ISMMS). Your advice and input has been greatly appreciated, and I'm grateful to have been encouraged. I am glad to be part of a community of scholars who recognize the important strides in academia that metal music studies is making. Another acknowledgment goes to the New York metal music community and to the women of Castrator, by whom this research was greatly inspired.

A huge thank you to my colleagues at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Hunter College, and Columbia University, especially Angela Washington, Dr. Aminata Maraesa, Dr. Jonathan Shannon, and Dave Motson. I am forever grateful for your guidance, patience and insights you provided to my research.

Thank you to my family who had the kindness to understand my “weird” tastes in music throughout my life, especially my mother, Aida Jocson, who inspired me to pursue challenges whether or not I can surmount them, and who showed me that with hard work and grit, comes achievement. And finally a great big “thank you” to my daughter, Ella. I am glad I went to the Maryland Deathfest while 6 months pregnant and let you hear Napalm Death from the womb. News of your birth was music to our ears.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ........................................................................................................ii
Note ........................................................................................................... iii
Acknowledgments ..................................................................................... iv
Table of Contents ....................................................................................... v
List of Graphs .......................................................................................... vi
List of Tables ........................................................................................... vii
List of Figures ........................................................................................... viii

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .................................................................. 1
  Extreme Metal Music ................................................................................ 9
  Theoretical Framework .......................................................................... 22

CHAPTER 2: NEW YORK’S EXTREME METAL MUSIC SCENE
  Gender Construction, Performativity, and Agency ............................... 28
  Story to Tell: Survey Findings ................................................................. 31
  Negotiating Gender ............................................................................... 41
  Gendered Behaviors: Observations from the Pit ..................................... 46
  Individual Interviews – Highlights (Annie & Justina) ......................... 49

CHAPTER 3: VIGILANTE FEMINISM
  The Women of Castrator ....................................................................... 62
  Unquestionable Presence: Race Among NY Female Extreme Metallers .. 68

CONCLUSION ......................................................................................... 78
WORKS CITED ......................................................................................... 80
APPENDICES .......................................................................................... 88
LIST OF GRAPHS

Graph 1. Identified EMM vocals by online survey participants .......................... 14
**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1. EMM vocal/music examples ................................................................. 11
Table 2. Age groups of online survey participants ........................................ 32
Table 3. Ethnicities of online survey participants .......................................... 32
Table 4. Age of online survey participants, by ethnicity .................................. 32
Table 5. Highest level of school of online survey participants ......................... 33
Table 6. Most common occupations of online survey participants .................. 33
Table 7. Online survey question: Do you play any instruments? ..................... 34
Table 8. Online survey question: If you play any instruments or sing, which ones? ..... 34
Table 9. Online survey question: Have you studied music, either formally or independently? ................................................................. 34
Table 10. Online survey question: What vocal styles do you employ? ............... 35
Table 11. Online survey question: What genres do you consider to be part of extreme metal music? ................................................................. 35
FIGURES

Figure 1: Metal Genealogy from Sam Dunn's 2005 film documentary: *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* ........................................................................................................................................13

Figure 2: Exhumed, *Gore Metal* (album cover 1998) .................................................................16

Figure 3: Mayhem, *Dawn of Black Hearts*, (album cover 1995) ..............................................16

Figure 4: Metal Meme ..................................................................................................................19

Figure 5: Behemoth performing in New York City, 2014 ..........................................................21

Figure 6: Cannibal Corpse, *Eaten Back to Life*, (album cover 1990) .........................................38

Figure 7: *Revolver’s* Hottest Chicks in Metal (May 2007) ......................................................38

Figure 8: Mastodon, "Motherload" - (video still, 2014) .................................................................39

Figure 9: Mastodon T-Shirt ........................................................................................................61

Figure 10: Members of NY based band, Castrator ......................................................................62
1. INTRODUCTION

Time is a thing we must accept
The unexpected I sometimes fear.
Just when I feel there's no excuse for what happens,
    Things fall into place
I know there is no way to avoid the pain that we must go through
to find the other half that is true
    Destiny is what we all seek…¹

-Chuck Schuldiner

The year 2000 introduced a myriad of new experiences to my life. I was going away to college, both to live and to study; I was going to have to get my first real job; and, finally, I was going to have to do all of this while maintaining a serious, long-distance relationship. For a recent high school graduate this was a double handful to juggle while learning the ropes of life away from home and how to deal with non-parental restrictions. It was also the first phase of my budding relationship with metal music.

I came into my relationship with metal late, as my first loves were 80s new wave, i.e., Joy Division, OMD, Depeche Mode, and The Cure, and punk like The Clash, Swinging Utters, and Minor Threat. I was very much a throwback new waver swimming in a sea of 90's pop, "alternative" rock, and hip hop from my early junior high school days up until my last year of high school when I started listening to punk. I blame it on having a sister 11 years older than me who often left vinyl records lying around the house with covers that could do nothing but fascinate my 13-year-old self. What could have

been as enticing to a young teenage girl as men with long hair looking like women and women with short hair looking like men? Thank you Annie Lenox.

Growing up in Yonkers, a suburb of NYC, life was, at times, surprisingly non-diverse. In my mind, it has always been the City's sixth borough, and with New York City's reputedly sheer abundance of artistic variety, it was surprising to me that while growing up there, I could not find others with the same interest in the music that I gravitated towards. Sure, my peers were predominantly Hispanic, Latino, Black and Asian kids, but in terms of musical diversity, my environment fell victim to the typical genre that pre-teens and teens listened to: mainstream popular music.

During the 1990s, while teens in my school were listening to Britney Spears, NSYNC, or Boys II Men, I was listening to The Cure and OMD. Because of my dated taste in music, I had managed to not be with the “in” crowd. I found solace in hanging out with my older siblings like the dweeby little sister in one of those John Hugh’s movies, anxiously trying to see what cool things my brother and sister were doing. When they threw parties, I was soaking up the subculture. It was no wonder when I look back I didn’t have the same interests as other teens my age. I was simply 13 going on 24.

My love of new wave transitioned into a love of "metal" as I found certain new wave bands carried the same rhythmic heaviness that I would later find in metal. Joy Division’s heavy bass lines, accompanied by Ian Curtis’ haunting and despairing baritone voice, transformed over time into the doom and death metal that I came to enjoy. Lyrically, Joy Division penned songs about death, life, and the human condition, themes that I would also encounter in much of the death metal I later heard.
In the early 2000s, I remember listening to Metallica’s self-titled album and thinking it was the heaviest thing I had ever heard. As a teen, nothing could compare to both the heaviness and the lyrical poetry vocalized by James Hetfield in "The Unforgiven" or "Nothing Else Matters". I felt an even greater sense of connection reading about Kirk Hammet being half-Filipino. There I was, a young Filipina, feeling validated that a half-Filipino guy could rock lead guitar in such a quintessential band! I didn’t care what his other half was!

It was years later, in 2007, when my relationship with metal - particularly death and doom metal - truly deepened. As time progressed, so did my transition to listening to heavier and heavier strains of metal. Unlike the average adolescent white male metalhead of the time who listened to more mainstream metal like Korn, Slipknot, or System of a Down, I started listening to extreme metal music (EMM) in my mid-twenties, not gravitating towards it due to any coming-of-age or rebellious stage of teenage-hood, but rather because of a life change (Arnett 1996). I had lost my mother to disease when I was twenty-three.

All of a sudden, the deep tonalities that I could find only within EMM rose to fill a void that no other music could. The deep growling vocals and aggressive blast-beats of death metal provided a form of transgressive and emotional experience for me. Being that the majority of bands are male-dominated in EMM, finding female musicians and vocalists that embodied the volume of rage and anger I felt was extremely rewarding. I found this catharsis listening to Karyn Crisis (Crisis) and Dawn Crosby (Fear of God).

When I was 18 and first heard death metal, I had the same knee-jerk reaction that most people who are unfamiliar with extreme music have, which was, “What is this
shit?!” I still vividly remember when my then-boyfriend and now-husband played Carcass to me for the first time. It was a song from their album *Heartwork* and I remember telling him what he had just played for me was “not music.” At the time, my ears couldn’t process the unfamiliar signature changes, the frenetic pace and even the hyper-shrieked vocal elements. However, I listened and became familiar with it. As I aged and my life transitioned from feelings of grief and death to hopefulness, my appreciation for EMM deepened.

For whatever reasons Carcass didn’t speak to my 18-year-old self, they snarled into my CD tray at twenty-five. *Heartwork* has since become one of my favorite death metal albums for its energy and intensity. What resonated was that although EMM was known for having misogynistic and aggressive lyrics, the content ranged from not just death, gore, and alienation but also to social commentaries on art, politics, philosophy and the human condition (Kahn-Harris 2007:10-11; Purcell 2003:188). *Heartwork*, in particular, cloaked these explications in medical terminology and thesaurus-fueled wordplay that took repeated listening to truly appreciate and which over time grew more meaningful. Although controversial with fans for its transitional status from grindcore to metal, *Heartwork* proved to be a gateway to what intellectual, poetic and non-misogynistic metal could be while retaining the key sonic elements that identified it as extreme metal. However, for all my love of the sound, the image of the metalhead as portrayed in popular culture was not one that I identified with. I am not male, white, pre-teen, or deviant (Arnett 1996:7; Walser 1993:109-110; Weinstein 1991:66). I came to realize that the lack of female role models in extreme metal is still an issue today. Whereas the general metal music subculture has seen the roles of women increase with
notable figures like Doro Pesch (Warlock), Lita Ford and Joan Jett (Runaways), and related acts like Sean Yseult (White Zombie) and Amy Lee (Evanescence), the media often only highlights female vocalists of mainstream heavy metal. Women in the EMM scene, like Jo Bench (Bolt Thrower), Angela Gossow (Arch Enemy) and Karyn Crisis (Crisis, Gospel of the Witches) remained relatively underground in comparison.

And so, with this realization, my exploration of femaleness within EMM began. As a librarian, I took to researching and intellectualizing the genre starting with talks with my husband and reading metal magazines and websites. I started wondering about the apparent lack of women and their representation within the broad EMM scene and their reception and role when they were present. I began reaching out to the academic metal community.

Questions began formulating in my mind. Why did other female fans listen to extreme metal? Why would they come to the music if it was considered misogynistic? I had my reasons, but what were theirs? If death metal espoused music about death, could it not equally talk about birth and creation - themes often coded as feminine - and remain in the extreme metal family? And in what ways were female musicians performing? Did taking part in the EMM community as a fan or musician empower these women in some manner? Does the re-appropriation of EMM re-contextualize the medium and allow for women to perform in a space of liminality or does it reify the dominant masculine hegemony of space? These complicated questions multiplied and gained weight as they sat in my head, and over time I found that I couldn't stop myself from trying to answer them in the only way a librarian and anthropology student could - through research and immersion in the field.
Few women exist in today's historical scope of icons who have paved the way for today's younger initiates in extreme metal. The majority of extreme metal icons, like Chuck Shuldiner, Chris Barnes, Trey Azagthoth and Alex Webster, are male. As mentioned, one such figure is Karyn Crisis of the band Crisis - who I've been a fan of for years. Crisis was not only innovative for having such a vivacious and provocative front-woman, but was also remarkable for being a band of mixed ethnicities from New York, with members spanning international waters. It was made up of bandmates Gia Chuan Wang (Taiwan) on bass, Afzaal Nasiruddeen (Pakistan) on guitar, and Fred Waring (United States) on drums. Lyrics were constructed by Karyn herself and often challenged extreme metal’s prevailing tendency to promote violent and misogynistic lyrical themes.

Ronald Bogue, a former professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Georgia, Franklin College, aptly summarizes Crisis’ innovation as a band with the following quotes:

> Although not a mainstream death metal band, Crisis uses many death motifs in its music, while its lyrics, penned by Karyn Crisis, articulate decidedly feminist concerns. (Bogue 2005:169)

And:

> With Crisis, this experimentation has taken an interesting turn, death metal’s musical energy, aggression, and violence expressing not a man’s but a woman’s rage and defiance. (Bogue 1996:3)

As a female death metal vocalist, Karyn's position and ability to challenge EMM's accepted status quo of male dominance and violence towards women using her voice and lyrics is readily apparent in songs like "Politics of Domination”, in which she employs alternating guttural and shrieked death metal vocals and "clean" vocals to sing the lines: “Born into hope then led to a cage/ So go on and bury me/ Like I was never here, never part of history/ Deny the crimes committed in my name/ Mutilate my cunt, erect a dick in
Another song entitled, "Sweething" from Crisis’ *8 Convulsions* album, echoes Crisis’ stance towards the masculine attitudes in the scene. She can be heard screaming, “Don't violate me/ Don't give a fuck what you have to say/ Don't violate me/ So you think you got me fingered/ I think you're looking like a fool/ A dumb fucking fool/ Can't violate me.” Author Julie Pinsonneault promptly encompasses this sentiment in her *Stylus Magazine* article where she writes,

> Women like Karyn didn’t join the metal world until the ’90s. As an anomaly in their field, they used tactics born of the 1960s and 1970s Women’s Liberation Movement, acting out in an aggressive manner onstage or taking on an androgynous persona, in order to assimilate with the men in their genre. They had to in order to prove themselves equal. 'That’s how it was in those days. You took care of your own problems,' says Karyn. (Pinsonneault 2007)

As one could surmise, the exploration of how female metallers like Karyn Crisis navigated the EMM terrain became a topic of great fascination for me. Additionally, my curiosity towards this subculture and its participants' practices became increasingly piqued when I found that very little scholarly literature had been published on the topic of women in extreme metal, especially with regard to their experiences in New York’s tri-state area. As a result, I began this thesis with the intent to analyze and shed light on women’s experiences in New York’s tri-state EMM scene and reveal their patterns of participation and understanding of feminism within extreme metal. Chapter one lays the groundwork by presenting a brief history of EMM and the methodology I used to explore the tri-state EMM scene, detailing the theoretical framework in which I situated my research and reviewed the works that have contributed to my study.

In chapter two, I analyze patterns that emerged from my survey and interviews with regard to gender construction, performativity and agency. I then review my
observations of behaviors and interactions at EMM shows and offer a glimpse of individual interviews with several participants. I also explore the influence of third wave feminism, in particular, vigilante feminism for women as performers through a lyrical analysis of music from the all-female death metal band Castrator. Following this, I discuss the emerging patterns of race and ethnicity that were identified from my study of the participants.

Lastly, given that the overall impression of women's existence in extreme metal is held as being few and far between, I conclude that there is both a changing perception and reality of women’s participation, yet many complex questions linger and repeatedly resurface around their acceptance, position, necessity and contribution to the scene as a whole. I end with suggestions for additional research centered on women in EMM and the applied theoretical framework of gender and performativity, as New York’s scene can serve as a particularly diverse and interesting site for further sub-cultural investigations.
Extreme Metal Music

I don’t think I should take the credit for this death metal stuff. I’m just a guy from a band, and I think Death is a metal band. If you consider the name and the singing style, yeah, we are into it. It’s very good to receive the laurels of it, no matter what they are about, but all I hope is to have done something good for metal. I’m a heavy metal fan and if I could do something to help, as a fan that would be good. I hope that these new things cause great impact and go further, especially here in America.2

-Chuck Schuldiner

“What’s considered extreme metal?” is a question I’ve heard often from friends and family, who might have heard of Metallica or Guns & Roses but have no idea who Bathory or Thorr’s Hammer are. I’ve also heard the same question from my interviewees, as it seems to have become a catch-all term for many of the strains and heavier genres of metal. As I began constructing my online survey, I was interested in polling the participants to learn what they considered to be a part of this category. The word *extreme* is used as an umbrella term for metal music that is considered tonally aggressive, often incorporating harsh, unrecognizable vocals, down-tuned guitars, extremely fast percussion, rapid "wall of sound" drumming through use of double-bass drumming and "blast beat" techniques, frequent tempo and time signature changes - but what most people first hinge on is the aforementioned inhuman vocal style. Lyrical content is frequently described as misogynistic and nihilistic in theme, often relaying stories of murder, rape, death, suicide, Satanism, the occult, and madness. In addition, authors like

---

Julian Schaap and Pauwke Berkers have cited “gender-biased evaluations” occurring towards women in the scene whereby women have been subjected to objectification, misogyny and even violence (Schaap and Berkers 2014:101-116). Yet, despite the gender violence, an increasing number of women have become active participants within this sub-culture (Kahn-Harris 2007; Vasan 2010; Hickam and Wallach 2011; Hill 2014; Kitteringham 2014).

As mentioned by Kahn-Harris in his book *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, EMM has often been met with incomprehension by listeners unfamiliar with its trappings, and trying to understand it can generate more questions than simple answers (Kahn-Harris 2007: 58). Unlike popular music, much of EMM’s defining characteristics can seem unrecognizable in a musical context to the mainstream listener. A number of scholars (Weinstein 1991; Vasan 2010; Kitteringham 2014; Mudrian 2004; Moynihan and Soderlind, 2003) have explored and attempted to explain its many facets including the historical emergence of sub-genres like thrash, death, black and grindcore. EMM is described as “extreme” in comparison to heavy metal due to an inherent characteristic of pushing beyond what's traditionally regarded as metal's own already-excessive sonic expanses (CrimsonKnight20 et al. 2013).

A defining and easily discernable distinction between EMM and heavy metal is found in its palette of vocals, which are very frequently deep growls and animal-like shrieking, at times indecipherable and arcane without the aid of a lyric sheet. Traditional singing in comparison uses the voice in a clear and discernable manner, whereby the listener can distinguish the words being sung; think Metallica’s "One" (traditional singing) versus Morbid Angel’s "God of Emptiness" (death vocals/growls) or At the
Gates' "Slaughter of the Soul" (shrieked vocals). Within the metal community, the guttural style of singing is often referred to as "cookie monster" vocals due to it being reminiscent of the voice of the character with the same name from the children's television show Sesame Street. The higher-pitched screams are often referred to as shrieks or hyper-shrieking. There are even distinctions based on more discrete tonalities, with some described as "pig squeals" which are popular with younger acts and "troll" voices employed by some black metal artists (Wikibooks, 2016). (See Table 1 for an example that differentiates EMM styles versus non EMM styles between male and female vocals.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male (not EMM)</th>
<th>Male (EMM-Normative)</th>
<th>Female (not EMM)</th>
<th>Female (EMM-Normative)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Considered traditional clean singing</td>
<td>Employs death growls, shrieking and screaming</td>
<td>Considered traditional clean singing</td>
<td>Employs death growls, shrieking and screaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metallica</td>
<td>Cannibal Corpse</td>
<td>Evanescence</td>
<td>Thorr’s Hammer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Maiden</td>
<td>Morbid Angel</td>
<td>Epica</td>
<td>Mortals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dream Theater</td>
<td>Carcass</td>
<td>Nightwish</td>
<td>Myrkur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jocson-Singh, 2014

These harsh and divergent vocal styles are perhaps one reason that the genre has found more favor and appeal with men than women. A pervading thought by metal fans on many EMM article comments sections assumes that such vocals are best produced by men, as the vocal register is seemingly more natural to them than to women and the style of music is unappealing to women. This concept is mired in what can be considered historically acceptable listening habits for women - "music as a gendered discourse" (McClary 1991:17). However, there are also acts which make use of more traditional "clean" singing or even operatic singing. This is often alternated with more outlandish vocal practices for contrast and tonal dynamics. Sometimes, this is accomplished by
multiple singers, such as with SepticFlesh's use of female operatic singers coupled with their own male growlers. Other times, a single vocalist is capable of producing sounds in multiple styles, like with Burton C. Bell of Fear Factory, who utilized both growled vocals and clean alto singing in the band's early works or with Karyn Crisis, who, during her time with the band Crisis, made use of shrieked, guttural and several different styles of clean singing to suit different parts of the band's music - often all within the same song. Most famous of female growlers is Angela Gossow, lead singer of Arch Enemy; her manner of vocals are indistinguishable from that of her male counterparts. There are other women employing this male-coded style of singing, like Kat Katz from Agoraphobic Nosebleed, Som Pluijmers, ex-member of Cerebral Bore, Kayla Phillips from Bleed the Pigs, and in New York M.S. from Castrator, and Lesley Wolf of Mortals.

Some of the more famous sub-genres of extreme metal including thrash, black, death, and grind often hold to musical structures that may be hard to discern to a person more accustomed to popular music. Though much of extreme metal includes familiar song components like a chorus, bridge, verse and intro and outro, their arrangements and even durations may render them unfathomable to unaccustomed ears. There are even more nuanced sub-genres, such as funeral-doom or sludge, that are played at exceedingly slow tempos and local variants with regional sound identifiers - like Swedish death metal, New York death metal and Norwegian black metal. That said, the umbrella of extreme metal provides coverage over all. An overview of extreme metal as an umbrella term is explored in an entry of anthropologist and film director Sam Dunn's work, Metal Evolution, a video documentary series exploring a multitude of metal genres. The 12th chapter in the series, "Extreme Metal: The Lost Episode," covers Florida death metal,
Norwegian black metal, grindcore and other subgenres of extreme metal. Through the course of the series, Dunn has mapped the various sub-genres of heavy metal's history over a span of 40 years. (See Figure 1 with image link for higher resolution version)

**Figure 1 - Metal Genealogy**


Historically, EMM has not met with the same popularity that traditional heavy metal music has seen throughout its progression. In fact, it has been argued among listervs, blogs and forums, that if extreme metal were to become commercialized and mainstream, it would lose its essential nature of being outsider music of the underground (Wallner 2015).

For my research, I surveyed and interviewed women who self-identified as fans of black metal, doom metal, thrash metal, death metal and grindcore, as survey results indicated that these were the most-recognized and agreed-upon extreme metal sub-genres
Although a handful of participants included thrash, doom, sludge, and djent as representative EMM genres, the overwhelming number cited death, grind, and black metal as EMM, with 87% identifying death metal as their sub-genre of preference (See Graph 1 below). Due to this, I provide a brief historical overview of the largest three EMM sub-genres: death, grind and black metal.

**Death metal**

Death metal has its beginnings in the late 80s in the United States and arguably bloomed in the early-to-mid 90s (Mishrell 2012:3). Its roots emerged out of the genre of thrash metal that existed during the early 80s from bands like Possessed, Metallica, and Slayer. This sound was known for its speed, technical musicianship, and aggression.
Death metal originated from the Tampa Bay area in Florida, displacing an image of a Florida known for its tropical climate, touristy beaches and shops, and Caribbean-inspired fusion cuisine. Why death metal started here is a question that has always baffled me. This question has been asked of death metal musicians many times in magazine and online interviews, but it has never been seriously answered. Much of its beginnings have been attributed to Morrisound Studios, which helped engineer a sound and brought the genre to the forefront of underground metal in the 80s and 90s. Morrisound produced bands like Death, Obituary, Deicide, Atheist, and Morbid Angel. Bands like Cannibal Corpse (NY) and Napalm Death (Britain) ended up travelling to Florida to record there. I have always wondered if there was a connection to Florida's wonderfully temperate climate and the need to write and create music so drastically different from what its sunny palm trees and crystal blue waters would seem to encourage.

The most prominent strain of death metal is characterized with down-tuned guitars, fast, intense drumming, often employing "blast beat" 64th notes played at very high tempos, and percussive explosions with rhythms most inspired by its thrash predecessor. The vocals employ abrasive, guttural, low-pitched, inhuman growls, screams, unearthly shrieking, and beastly - if it can be called such - singing. Heavily inspired by dark themes of death, gore, violence, and war, many early death metal bands featured album covers with horror movie-inspired art (See figures 2 and 3) and song names like "Regurgitated Guts," "Burning in Hell," "Entrails Ripped from a Virgin’s Cunt," and "Fucked With a Knife."
Pushing the envelope on cultural sensibilities, death metal was a speedier, heavier and more distorted progression than its predecessor, thrash, both lyrically and compositionally. Lyrically, it moved away from the more politically and sociologically-based themes of many thrash songs and truly embraced violence, anti-religious sentiment and the occult. Where thrash bands utilized some of these themes, death metal bands exceeded them in terms of graphic content (Purcell 2003:173). This move towards more controversial and graphic content resulted in reactions from both media and popular culture, especially from organizations like the PMRC, who infamously created the "parental advisory" label that was later placed on all controversially-categorized music (Christe 2004).
Perhaps most notable of death metal's Florida scene was its global impact. Comparable death metal scenes emerged in other parts of the world, with especially influential scenes arising in New York and Sweden and other notable scenes springing in Britain and Eastern Europe, particularly Poland. Today, death metal is a global musical phenomenon, reaching to every populated continent and even clandestinely finding root in countries with restrictive avenues for musical expression in the Mid-East, Southeast Asian countries and the continent of Africa.

With New York, my home-town, I was most interested in seeing how women fare within the scene. New York's death metal is different, stylistically, than that found in Floridian death. As music writer Natalie Purcell writes, "The guitars in Floridian death are not generally tuned as low as other forms of death metal. The guitar-work is more tight, precise and clear" differentiating itself from the New York scene which seems to favor "down-tuned, palm-muted slam riffs that encouraged moshing (Purcell 2003:17). New York's death metal bands also introduced different rhythmic applications of blast beats and a more guttural approach to growled vocals than their Sunshine State peers. Noted New York bands include Immolation, Suffocation, Cannibal Corpse, and Mortician. In terms of general sonic aesthetics, the Empire State favors a more "brutal" approach to their guitar riffage while the Floridian ones favor a more "technical" one. The scene even led to a large sub-genre now known as "brutal death metal", and to "slam death metal", that was pioneered by the band Internal Bleeding.

While Florida's scene birthed a technical death metal sound and New York's brought forth its brutal strain, Sweden formed bands like At the Gates, Entombed,
Therion, Tiamat, Dark Tranquility and later Arch Enemy, Soilwork and In Flames emerged, creating a more melodic and even symphonic style of death. Gothenburg became the hub for melodic death metal, and Stockholm produced more stripped-down, "raw" death metal, influenced by hardcore punk (Ekeroth 2008: 266-267). The most notable studio in Sweden was Sunlight Studios, with its production roster and sound being as influential in Europe as Morrisound Studio's was in the United States. As death metal progressed, so did its subgenres, splintering into a diffusion of categorical genres like brutal, technical, progressive, and blackened, etc.

**Grind or (grindcore)**

Almost simultaneously, the UK grindcore scene was exploding while death metal was occurring in the states. Bands like Carcass, Napalm Death, and ENT (Extreme Noise Terror) emerged. Grindcore’s sound can best be described as a crustier version of thrash meets hardcore punk, whereby composition consists of fast blast-beat drumming, distorted, down-tuned guitars, and distorted, overdriven bass accompanied by high-pitched shrieking and low, growling grunts and barks (reminiscent of the hardcore punk influence); and very often the songs are short. In fact, this last bit on short song creations have spurred a plethora of jokes and memes like the one seen in figure 4 and was famously exemplified in Napalm Death's 1-second song, "You Suffer".
Taking cues from its punk forefathers, much of grindcore dealt with topics of a political and social or sociological bent. Later branches, such as goregrind or pornogrind, focused on themes of gore and violence and of pornographic sexual motifs, respectively. Musically, grindcore even crossed more deeply with death metal to generate deathgrind, a sub-genre described by Dan Lilker of Brutal Truth as "combining the technicality of death metal with the intensity of grindcore." (Grind Your Mind: A History of Grindcore liner notes, 2007).

**Black metal**

Black metal emerged during the early 80s, almost as a response to the saturation occurring with the relative commercialization of death metal. Characteristically known by its dark melodies, shrieking vocals, discordant guitar playing and fast tempos, black metal has risen in popularity in the past twenty years and is most associated with anti-Christian sentiment, corpse paint, and the burning of churches. Atmosphere is heavily emphasized in much black metal, and early forms favored a lo-fi or "raw" recording sound. This has since evolved to include higher-quality production and even inclusion of
operatic and symphonic elements. Newer strains produced by acts such as the female-fronted Denigrata even blend industrial and harsh electronic elements into their sound.

In *Lords of Chaos: The Rise of the Satanic Underground* authors Soderlind and Moynihan discuss the roots of black metal music and focus on NBM - Norwegian black metal, commonly accepted as the most visceral strain of the style. NBM has historical roots in what anthropologist Sam Dunn has called the first wave of black metal (Dunn 2005). Bands of this early wave included the likes of Bathory, Venom, Hellhammer, and Celtic Frost.

Later, towards the early 90s, black metal irrevocably tied itself with anti-Christian and Satanic ideologies. The thought-processes of Anton Szandor LaVey, who founded the Church of Satan in 1966 and wrote *The Satanic Bible* in 1969, carried significant weight within this second wave of black metal. LaVey’s work extolled the virtues of self-analysis and the exploration of personal instinct. It also contained formulas for mystical rituals and alternate viewpoints on ideas about divinity. With this ideology at the forefront, bands like Mayhem, Burzum and Gogoroth emerged. The backdrop for this has been explained in *Lords of Chaos* as being a reaction to the overwhelming acceptance of Christianity in Norway and the Norwegian government’s related censorship of media deemed inappropriate by Christian values. One example given is that during the past 70 years, only one horror movie has been produced, out of thousands of movies produced in the country. Comedic films, such as Monty Python’s *Life of Brian* were initially banned for blasphemy and violence in the media and suppressed to the point that cartoons are pulled off of the air if they contain gun imagery. Norway’s controlling forces focused on social and media-centric prohibitions. Soderlind and Moynihan posit that the repression
of violent, dark and occult media in Norway led to a hunger for it amongst certain segments of the populace, which in turn opened the doors for the birth of NBM as an uncontrolled musical outlet. Lack of a public forum in which to explore these themes and ideas may have led those who became part of the NBM movement to gorge upon its excesses. This heavy anti-Christian sentiment can best be described in Soderlind’s words, “…considered to be an alien religion, and forced on one’s ancestors under threat of death” (Moynihan and Söderlind 2003:19). When viewed from this perspective, cultural censorship of violence encouraged and contributed to the rise of church burnings associated with NBM during the 90’s.

Tied to such controversial ideologies and acts such as the infamous church burnings, black metal has also seen extremity within its musical stylings, producing lo-fi and abrasive music with wailing and shrieking vocal applications. In addition, the theatrics of corpse paint and costuming has led to a complete diversion from other metal genres in regards to performance. Some examples include bands like, Abbath, Sun O))) or Behemoth, which perform, almost ritualistic displays of spectacle during shows. Members of the band appear in full costume (See Figure 5).

Figure 5 - Behemoth Performing in New York City, 2014

Theoretical Framework

If the whole enterprise of musical activity is always already fraught with gender related anxieties, then feminist critique provides a most fruitful way of approaching some of the anomalies that characterize musical institutions.  

-Susan McClary

I identify as a feminist, which to me means being aware of the struggles, conditions, and power of being a woman. Due to my own life struggles, I had to look outside myself as well, at the lives of other women to see how we are all connected through abuse as a means to keep us from empowerment.  

-Karyn Crisis

In November 2014, I was invited to talk about my research on women's involvement in the extreme metal community in the New York tri-state area at the University of Dayton. On the day I presented, the third speaker, Jasmine Shadrack of the University of Northampton, began her presentation with a sample of death metal that featured guitars, bass, drums, and a vocalist singing in typical death metal style (i.e. growling beastly screams). After the clip ended, the presenter asked the audience, "Can you tell me anything different or distinct about what you just heard...Anyone?" Two men in the audience raised their hands and said something to the effect of, "Was it a female vocalist?" to which the speaker replied, with a tiny laugh, "No, but I'll tell him you thought he sounded like a woman." She then surprised the crowd by revealing that the difference was that the guitar player was a woman - indeed it was her. The point of her query was that male and female instrumentalists can't be distinguished by the sound of...  

---

their music alone, but people still judge and do so by a set of codes and normative behaviors imparted in a given musical genre.

This lesson struck home for me in two ways. One was how easy it is for me and everyone else in the audience to automatically think "male" when thinking metal and, two, why, in a time of postmodern acceptance of women and their participation in the music industry, have we continued to dismiss women and their value? Myself and the audience fell victim to an engendered interpretation of the music.

Women have always been involved in the world of music, whether as singers or instrumentalists, and yet in the historical canon of most musical genres, the acknowledgment of their significant contributions is lacking (McClary 1991: 5). Interestingly, this doesn't seem to be the case in modern popular music, where women are very much in the limelight, yet their historical representation remains scarce within classical, rock, jazz, metal, and many more musical genres. If women are acknowledged, it seems almost always negative.

This lack of representation has been explained by a number of scholars, most evident in the works of feminist ethnomusicologist Susan McClary. In her book *Feminine Endings* (1991), McClary writes about the historical challenges women have faced in both musical participation and production, and the obstacles placed before them by society through stereotyped perceptions of their gender being considered weaker and unable to sustain creativity. Objectified and limited in their social activities, it seemed that many women have had to conform to societal expectations of their gender, (i.e. softer and melodic musical sensibilities befitting a feminine decorum) (McClary 1991: 9-12).
In Western society, aspects of femininity and masculinity have been placed in binaries, whereby males are associated with characteristics of strength, aggression and power, and females are characterized in direct opposition: weakness, passivity, and impotence (Weinstein 1991: 67). In EMM as well as other musical genres, these strong binaries work to reinforce cultural barriers and obstacles for women in a number of ways: sexualization, abuse/violence and even the questioning of authenticity.

For feminist musicologists like McClary, discussion of topics such as music, gender, and feminist critique have opened the doors for new investigations. Most recently, women in interdisciplinary fields have taken up the mantle of writing about women and their participation within metal music offering a self-reflectivity that was lacking in previous studies conducted only by male scholars. To date, studies of metal in Canada (Kitteringham 2014), Texas (Vasan 2010), the United Kingdom (Riches 2011, Hill 2012, Shadrack 2014), and Tasmania (Phillipov 2006) have written explicitly on women and their involvement with metal and rock relative to their regions. My research offers additional analysis of gender performativity specific to the EMM scene in the New York tri-state area to explain women’s participation with their overall understandings of the masculine practices at play within EMM. Moreover, I explore women’s involvement with establishing a space of liminality and resistance within this same scene.

Judith Butler coined the term gender performativity to examine the ways in which gender is created as an identity by and for people and not simply as a biological construct. She distinguishes gender formation as being different from sex, which is typically viewed as a scientific and biological construction (Butler 1991). Gender, to Butler, is a social construct encompassing a set of behaviors that we perform and reenact
as a means of adopting "gender" as a persona. In other words, gender is akin to something we put on, like an article of clothing. Butler's most-referenced example is her analogy of the "drag" performance of gender binaries. Butler believed that the drag performance was a ritual often performed by gay men who dressed as women, at times costumed in the most dramatic and overdone fashion, which disrupted the gender code through impersonation. This “drag” performance was similar to what I was witnessing in my observations when attending metal shows in New York however, most of my participants identified as heterosexual women and therefore inverted the traditional definition of drag, which usually references gay men. Women in New York’s EMM scene often adhere to disruption in gender coding by clothing themselves in typical male fashion: loose-fitting metal t-shirts, jeans, tattoos and piercings, material constructions often labeled as masculine in appearance. They engage in headbanging, moshing, and screaming, again traits and behaviors also considered masculine. Along these lines, women in New York’s EMM scene challenge the conventionally-coded masculine space of the EMM subculture and open up a form of liminality for enacting feminine participation.

These instances of appearance validate ideas of gender's formation being chosen and shaped by an individual's preference of how to behave, dress or act towards the opposite sex, including how they cross the lines and assume traits and behaviors of the opposite sex. Gender, in Butler’s theory, is an identity formed out of action and construction of what is considered socially-acceptable conduct. For the women in New York’s EMM scene, gender performance becomes a counter-narrative towards EMM's overall masculine environment.
With further investigation, I looked to other works written by and about women and marginalization within musical scenes. As academic acceptance grows for metal music studies, more and more female academics are emerging to write about their experiences and the research they’ve conducted on women in extreme metal. Having women write from their own perspective within the heavy metal music scene is important, as much of the historical literature has been largely written by men.

For example, *Female Authority and Dominion: Discourse and Distinctions of Heavy Metal Scholarship* (Hickam and Wallach 2011) documents female academic authors and their contributions to metal scholarship in their appendix of mass-marketed books and scholarly monographs with significant discussion of heavy metal or hardcore punk music. It includes titles with author names along with icons representing the gender of each author. The overwhelming scarcity of female writers - 22 women to 95 men shows need for more female academics writing and discussing women in metal (Hickam and Wallach 2011:255-277). Their article was helpful in my own research with regard to looking at metal through gender.

Another important lens through which I analyzed my participants is the "new musicology" theory put forth by musicologist Susan McClary, who has built her oeuvre of work on analyses concerning gender, feminism and musical practice. McClary's "new musicology" theory focuses on the examination of several factors relevant to the approach of traditional musical analysis. Her theory questions the traditional and critical production of music, in which she argues musical discourse, in its traditional analysis, was often interpreted as gendered; for example, musical ending or cadence being soft/weak equals "feminine" (McClary 1991: 26). With this perspective, I found
McClary's historical investigation of the construction of gender and sexuality as it relates to EMM helpful in examining my participants’ worldview of EMM music, especially her view that women utilize discursive strategies, “where women can choose to write music that foregrounds their sexual identities without falling prey to essentialist traps and that departs self-consciously from the assumptions of standard musical procedures" (Ibid., 26).

This last point was evident with my interview with two members of the all-female New York-based death metal band, Castrator. Castrator’s lyrical and musical composition deliberately addresses anxieties and problematic sexual tropes abundant in the male-dominated death metal scene. In effect, Castrator is creating a new genre of feminist death metal and allowing female musicians to perform a form of vigilante feminism in a space of liminality. By applying Butler and McClary's theories in my analysis of participants, new narratives of real differences, not between just men and women, but between women themselves in EMM, shows the various ways in which sexism still occurs. Butler's feminism makes room for investigating the intersections of race, sexuality and class relevant to musical tastes and identity making. McClary's application of "discursive strategies" gives clarity to the many challenges women face that are brought about by institutional tradition like masculine hegemony.

Altogether, I situate the entire study in relation to my own understandings of feminism as well as the female participants’ understanding of feminism in order to navigate the problematic discourse in EMM that often deals with lyrics that objectify women. What comes to light is how my participants' agency and forms of resistance break ground for their marginalized status.
2. NEW YORK’S EXTREME METAL MUSIC SCENE

Gender Construction, Performativity and Agency

We act and walk and speak and talk in ways that consolidate an impression of being a man or being a woman…….It’s my view that gender is culturally formed, but it’s also a domain of agency or freedom and that it is most important to resist the violence that is imposed by ideal gender norms, especially against those who are gender different, who are nonconforming in their gender presentation.5

~Judith Butler

Women's place in metal is still at times being met with skepticism and misunderstanding. Even as late as the 2000s a growing presence and acceptance of women who participate in the scene has been noted with articles like Kristy Loye's "Metal’s Problem with Women is Not Going Away Anytime Soon" (2015), which points out that although there is an increased number of women participating in heavy metal, women are still under scrutiny by both men inside and outside of the scene.

It is true that women have been recognized by the mainstream music community as musicians and vocalists as well as a significant part of the fan base, though their prominence in comparison to every male that glosses a heavy metal magazine cover can be and often is debated. While women and their participation is nothing new in terms of the larger context of heavy metal and rock, when one examines extreme metal music and specific regions in particular, their numbers dwindle in comparison to their male counterparts. This was a surprising revelation to me with regard to New York, as I had

5 “Judith Butler: Your Behavior Creates Your Gender,” YouTube video, 3:00, posted by “bigthink,” June 6, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc
always been under the impression that New York would draw a gender and race balance when it came to both fan and musician demographics. I found that women are more equally represented in New York's extreme metal scene, and Latina women presented almost as numerously as white women.

According to Robert Walser, "Heavy metal is, inevitably, a discourse shaped by patriarchy" (Walser 1993:109); its audience and its very livelihood was supported by mostly teenage white males and their viewing and listening pleasures. Historically, women, both in New York and abroad, have had less ability for movement within the public sphere than men, and this includes what is deemed acceptable for their listening pleasure. This limited ability of movement shrinks further when we start including women of color and points to much-needed research about intersectionalities of race, gender, and class in metal music. For example, one of my participants, who identified as a young Hispanic woman, told me how, as a young girl, she was only allowed to go to shows if her older brother was present, pointing to what was allowed or considered permissive behavior. Anecdotes like this haven’t been explored in depth with previous studies. Although Walser does not underscore gender and women in his study, with only one chapter in his book devoted to their analysis, much room is left for a thorough analysis of women and their involvement within the scene.

A more recent analysis (Scahaap and Berkers 2016: 101-116) studied the numerical underrepresentation of women in EMM in the Netherlands. It found that less than 15% of the general EMM audience worldwide is made up of women due to a number of factors which included the way that EMM is performed and formulated, its popularity outside of mainstream metal, and its hegemonic understandings of masculinity
and femininity. The study reveals the unevenness of the male-to-female ratio within the scene.

Journalist, scholar and blogger Beth Winegarner has spoken about the growing changes from the metal scene of her days in the early 1980s to current times in an interview conducted on the website Invisible Oranges in which she discusses how women recognized within the metal scene as musicians and fans suffer a different form of sexism based on their appearance (Winegarner 2011). She cites the popular metal magazine Revolver as a reference with their annual special issue called “The Hottest Chicks in Metal.” This dilemma points to the cost of recognition and questions whether any exposure of women participating within metal should be considered progress. In another online article at People's World, metal music editor Kim Kelly says the following, supporting this troubling practice of policing and exploiting women's bodies:

The idea is simple enough. Each year, Revolver publishes a collection of features focused on female bands or band members, replete with big pictures splashed across the pages. Ostensibly, the idea is to provide exposure to the women of metal, and celebrate them for their talent and brains as well as their beauty. But the ladies' backgrounds and achievements often play second fiddle to their 'dangerous curves' (Kelly 2012).

While men are featured in the issues throughout the year, female musicians get relegated to this once-a-year “special issue,” reducing their importance instead of highlighting and being beneficial to other young female fans. When questioned, some of my female participants considered it to be exploitive, while others felt no need to analyze such depictions, citing that they were more concerned about the music and not the politics. Not surprisingly, I sometimes sensed a hesitation with some of my interviewees to talk about their own negative experiences when I brought up issues of exploitation like
Revolver’s "Hottest Chick" issue. However it's important to note that almost all of my participants cited that they witnessed or were personally victim to negative treatment within the scene by both women and men.

While men certainly still outnumber women in attendance and wear the standard uniform of black jeans/black band shirts, women exhibit several types of appearances which are inevitably tied to their gender. There are a variety of differences that constitute the make-up of a person who presents as either male or female. People are constantly under pressure to make a gender attribution because of these differences (Kessler & Mckenna 1978). It is with this notion that I began examining how and why women participate in EMM and in what ways their embodied identities exist within the tensions of male-to-female relationships in the scene.

**Story to Tell**: Survey Findings

The women that I’ve observed and interviewed within New York’s EMM scene are fans and musicians, consumers and producers. From my survey results of 78 respondents, the median participant age was between 24 and 35 years old, with over 70% identifying as white and having graduated with a bachelor’s degree or higher in education (See tables 2 - 6 below). Most participants identified with careers in the arts, with 28% citing arts over others fields like healthcare and business.

---

Even when taken together, non-Caucasians represented only 25% of the survey participants, but had a greater showing at actual performances, particularly Hispanics and Latinas. Most of the women who participated in the online survey were 25-34 years old, with 18-24 and 35-44 year olds following. The sole outlier by age was a 65-74 year old Asian with a graduate degree who sang but played no instruments. The sole outlier by ethnicity was a 35-44 year old black woman who was in graduate school, had studied music formally, but did not sing or play any instruments.
In addition, an overwhelming percentage of women, 70%, claimed to be musicians (amateur or professional status unknown). About 78% of respondents studied music, and more than 2/3 of that number studied formally instead of being self-taught. Most women identified singing as their first “instrument” of choice, with playing guitar and bass as close seconds (See tables 7-9). Nine participants were multi-instrumentalists, with the majority of them coupling guitar with bass or guitar with keyboard. Other instruments which were represented in smaller numbers included clarinet, cello, violin, fiddle, French horn, ukulele, flute, mandolin and trumpet. Its interesting to note that these are all European instruments. Non-European instruments aren't represented at all, even though minorities made up 25% of the respondents.
Table 7 - Online survey question: Do you play any instruments?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Play music</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>70.21%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29.79%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(31 skipped)

Source: Author's survey

Table 8 - Online survey question: If you play any instruments or sing, which ones?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>35.29%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drums</td>
<td>26.47%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guitar</td>
<td>44.12%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyboard</td>
<td>32.35%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>55.88%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(44 skipped)

Source: Author's survey

Table 9 - Online survey question: Have you studied music, either formally or independently?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Studied music</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes, formally</td>
<td>54.35%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, independently</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(32 skipped)

Source: Author's survey

“Clean singing” – a mode of singing in which the voice is unaltered and is what mainstream listeners would consider a "normal" or "plain" voice – was identified as most common among the participants, showing an 80% total utilization (See table 10 below). Growling and shrieking techniques came in under 50% each, but growling was fairly well-represented at 45% - roughly half of the vocalist respondents employed them. Of those who utilized multiple vocal styles, 3 participants incorporated clean singing, growling and shrieking and 3 used clean singing and growling. Only one used solely-growled vocals and none used solely-shrieked vocals.

Of those who sang and played instruments, 3 utilized growled and/or shrieked vocals and played instruments: 1 growled and played guitar, keyboard and bass, 1 growled, shrieked and played keyboard and 1 employed growls, shrieking and played guitar and keyboard. Of those who employed clean vocals, 11 played instruments as well. Five of the participants who studied music formally did not play instruments, but 11 of them sang. All of those who studied music informally played at least one instrument, with 6 of them playing multiple instruments. Only 3 who studied music informally sang as
well. So, overall, the majority of the participants studied music to some degree, sang or performed vocals and played at least one instrument. What's curious about this is that with these numbers, we don't have more extreme metal bands in the New York area that include women. It's possible that some of these women perform other styles of music and play in the area, however.

In the context of Butler and McClary's theoretical frameworks, I deployed ethnographic methods to research the volume of participation in New York's EMM scene. I attended concerts and local shows, surveyed female participants via an online survey, and conducted one-on-one interviews with several women who identified as producers and fans within the local scene. Early in 2014, I conducted fieldwork by attending shows in the New York tri-state area which included seeing the following bands: Godflesh, Cut Hands, Pharmakon, Behemoth, Goatwhore, 1349, Inquisition, Black Crown Initiate, Mortals, Mammals, Godmaker, Death (DTA tour), Massacre, Obituary, Gospel of the Witches, and Hudson Horror, as well as having attended previous Deathfests held in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocal styles</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean singing</td>
<td>81.82%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growling</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrieking</td>
<td>18.18%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(56 skipped)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author's survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-genre</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>81.25%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>87.50%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deathcore</td>
<td>43.75%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djent</td>
<td>34.38%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doom</td>
<td>59.38%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grindcore</td>
<td>78.13%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sludge</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrash</td>
<td>59.38%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(46 skipped)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Author's survey*
Baltimore Maryland – known as the most comprehensive extreme metal festival in the Northeast.

The online survey portion of my research collected answers from a total of 78 respondents between July 2014 and December 2014 with 60% completed replies and 40% partial or incomplete. The shows I went to tended to consist of a slight gender bias towards male attendees by my own observation, but it did not seem to be by a large percent. People grouped themselves with mixed-gender groups and at times, I saw single men and single women in the audience. For example, at the 2014 Behemoth show, I approached a woman who was unaccompanied and inquired if she came to the show with any friends, and she related to me that she didn’t have any friends who would be interested in seeing this particular band, so she had come alone. She seemed very confident and approachable, so I was able to hand her a card with information about my online survey. Ironically, she too handed me a flyer about the roller-derby team she was part of and their upcoming events and spoke about her regular attendance of metal shows by herself.

Generally speaking, when attending an extreme metal show in New York, the participant is greeted with a distinct visual image of a scene in which men have long hair, sport macabre tattoos, piercings, wear black pants, combat boots and the unreadable logos of their favorite bands on black t-shirts. It is this undecipherable text that becomes a visual metaphor of what is construed as authentic within the scene. The individuals who can discern the identities of the obscure bands represented by arcane emblems and cryptic lettering are considered true or “kvlt” to the scene, a term often used to convey authenticity within the underground EMM scene. Interestingly, some of the women I
spoke to said that this authenticity was awarded differently depending on gender, citing that a male could be afforded authenticity regardless of his knowledge of bands or the music, whereas as females were often “tested”. This is similar to the infamous "fake geek girl" assumptions brought to light in 2012 by tech writer Tara Tiger Brown, who questioned women’s real expertise in a subject other than for attention purposes (Brown 2012). This testing of authenticity that Brown points out was in relation to the gaming community and the rise of an online hate campaign using the hashtag symbol and #gamergate. Authors Evans and Janish describe #gamergate as “an incendiary reaction to the changing (no longer overwhelmingly white, cisgender, heterosexual and male specifically) demographic of game players… arguing that GamerGate supporters operated under a false binary of identity: either one is a true gamer (male, masculine), or one is a feminist woman trying to be a gamer” (Evans and Janish 2015). A similar phenomena is occurring in the metal and extreme metal communities, with "traditional" (i.e., straight, white, male) metal fans protesting incursions into their musical scene territories by women, people of color and non-hetero fans (Rosenberg 2016).

Within the EMM scene, building specific knowledge of bands, musical styles, and musicians allows one to build symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1985), affording an individual recognition and inclusiveness. What I found, at first glance, was that women who attended without boyfriends or husbands seemed to be of specific interest to the men present at shows. Whether this was a sexual interest or mild curiosity I was unable validate.

In terms of dress, the plain black uniform or band shirt attire has typically been coded as male because of its lack of emphasis on sexuality and the human form. As noted
earlier, a variety of behaviors constitute authentic participation within the EMM scene and both men and women are constantly judged and gazed upon to evaluate the authenticity of their presence at these gatherings. Men are positioned with the power of action - they are often the performers and decision makers, whereas women are visually presented for the male’s viewing consumption; female sexuality is emphasized by attire that accentuates their bodies. In essence, this male perspective acts as a lens through which men can feel privileged and entitled to seeing women as objects. Feminist critic Laura Mulvey (1975) asserts that this concept permeates most prominently in film, but as applied to the EMM scene, it can be found appearing in everything from how women are depicted on album covers, lyrics, and music videos to the clothing that they wear. (See figures 6, 7, and figure 8).

**Figure 6 - Cannibal Corpse, Eaten Back to Life**
(album cover, 1990)

**Figure 7 - Revolver’s “Hottest Chicks in Metal” issue,**
(May, 2007)

Source: Pinterest. Accessed May 17, 2015. https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/c2/c4/6a/c2c46a4e0a3ebd5483011a8ae8292e6b.jpg

Moreover, this male gaze occurs most often towards women and their presentation as authentic fans, thereby reducing women’s participation to that of groupie, poser, or appendage. Sonia Vasan has given two categories in which women in EMM must submit: ‘den mothers/true fans’ or ‘band whore/groupie’ (Vasan 2010).

Women are frequently positioned simply as objects and consumers without the ability to produce, unlike their male counterparts, e.g. musicians (Hill 2012). For example, Tom Tom Magazine's editor-in-chief, Mindy Abovitz, talks about the reasons that she created her magazine, which focuses on women drummers and is based out of Brooklyn in an article published online from Coke Machine Glow:

I think that female drummers often end up in the category of “uncelebrated” for a number of reasons, all having pretty much to do with sexism. Like, starting later on in life, because you’re not given the opportunity that a guy is. You’re not given a drum kit at 15. So, all of those things sort of fall into place to create the circumstances that female drummers end up going through. (Zoladz 2010)
Abovitz's interview demonstrates that women musicians are not readily recognized, regardless of the style of music they play, and this is especially true with extreme metal. Policing of women and their appearance exists by both men and women in the scene. Many of the women I interviewed posited their own categorizations of women in the scene, citing ways they could differentiate themselves from other groups of women who simply attended as appendages to their boyfriends, or were looking to “hook up.” In this way, my observations were no different than Vasan’s when considering how some women viewed other groups of women within the scene.

In addition, another woman from my survey claimed that there is sometimes a feeling of competition that is at times race-based. She said, “I think there is a bit more competition, and in some cases, white women use their positioning in the larger society to try and demean your presence, more than men,” indicating an awareness of the various intersectionalities existing besides gender, like that of race, ethnicity, and class. This point became an interesting bit of information that I wanted to delve into later as I was curious about multiple mentions of “girl-on-girl” maliciousness, which were recounted by several interviewees including SiriusXM DJ personality Zeena Koda, who has separately been quoted saying, “I hate that I am always getting put up against other people. Women especially are put up against each other. You shouldn’t be in competition with each other. It’s sad that that’s what it always boils down to” (Young 2013).

Another participant, "Jessica," said that although she never felt completely unsafe at shows; it was an easy forum for being physically assaulted, sarcastically stating, “Never had a female grope me.” It’s important to note that these negative experiences
that were relayed to me can be and are instances in which participation becomes hindered or even deterred for these women.

On the other hand, other participants cited more positive thoughts regarding other women participating within the scene, saying that it was empowering and a form of camaraderie to see women present and attending in their own groups, relating to me that it’s perhaps the initial entrance into the subculture that might be the toughest. However, women gatekeepers do exist in the metal scene. Some of it might be regional. I found that in the boroughs of New York City, women were receptive to being interviewed and sharing their experiences in the scene, both online and offline. Outside of the boroughs, in Westchester, women were far more reticent and unwilling to share information and connections in their metal cliques. Interestingly, men in Westchester often shared contact information of women metal fans who they knew, but these women seldom responded to attempts of contact.

Negotiating Gender

Clothing is known to express and reveal an individual's identity and has been an aspect of study by social scientists for some time. With regard to performativity, fashion has become a way in which individuals present and confirm their embodied natures to the greater world in a physical sense, creating identity markers of belonging (Twigg 2009). As markers of identity, how we dress is therefore tied to gender construction and can act as a place of tension, resistance, or conformity. Conflicting ideas of agency for women exist and are central to the discourse of power and social practice (Franckenstein 1997). The body therefore becomes politicized and manifests into a platform in which expressions of identity are played out. This was especially true when observing women in
EMM. At the shows I attended, women could be found sporting tattoos or clothing that was ripped, torn, or provocative. In addition, women with shaved hairstyles and facial piercings were not uncommon. Eileraas (1997) notes that the body can be an area for resistance to conformity with which women challenge perceptions of femininity through the donning of what’s been traditionally considered masculine attire. By performing this type of “ugliness” or gender reversal, women make space for (re)claiming a dominant, if not equal, role within the scene. This provides them with some agency and was evident in the situated context of the shows I attended.

Analysis of the responses of the 78 women who participated in this study’s online portion as well as participant-observation during shows I attended in the New York tri-state EMM scene revealed several interesting characteristics with regard to clothing and appearance. It was not uncommon to see women dressed similarly to their male counterparts in the typical metal fan uniform of black band shirt with black pants. As mentioned previously, this uniform symbolizes authenticity within the scene. Historically, how members within the heavy metal scene represent themselves, both as fans and musicians has been open to various interpretations. Within EMM, more men than women wear band shirts featuring images of mutilated, violated, or naked women. Of course this is not surprising as women tend to have to answer to societal appearances more so than men in leisure activities. It becomes a signifier of the ways in which women’s mobility is limited. For example, women are more likely to face scrutiny for their outfits by both men and women in most settings, whereas men aren't expected to subscribe to the same level of judgment due to societal norms.
However, I have met many men in the scene that are avid supporters of feminism and women's equal rights. This area of artistic license remains problematic in what it promotes and says about both musicians and fans and even in my interviews remained an issue for women who tried to reconcile their love of the genre with their feelings about gender. They found it difficult to navigate the blurring line of artistic expression and political subjectivity.

In addition to this considerably "male" presentation of dress, there were women who dressed in a "hyper-feminized" fashion, wearing corsets, tight-fitting leather skirts and often stiletto or high-heeled boots. Weinstein (2000) notes that heavy metal, and, by extension, EMM, are founded on masculine ideals of power and strength. Similar to Vasan (2010), Weinstein argues that women are restricted to only two options: “as sex objects to be used and abused” or “… renouncing their gender and pretending to be one of the boys” (Weinstein 2000:221). This indicates a level of awareness for women in the scene to subscribe to being policed by their male counterparts in order to gain acceptance to the scene. This EMM space is inscribed as masculine, functioning and adhering to traditional social and cultural constructs of identity, whereby gender becomes a primary criteria for participation within the scene. Again, women who choose to participate are assumed to negotiate their gender presentation by conforming to masculine notions of what is acceptable.

These reasons explain why presentation of dress for women within EMM seems to have two forms of expression, as mentioned earlier: ‘den mother’ or ‘band whore’, modes of presentation still governed by masculine hegemony (Vasan 2010). Vasan defined den mothers to be women who adopted masculine fashion and therefore
masculinized themselves in both dress and demeanor and band whores to be women who over-emphasized their sexuality by dressing provocatively. Den mothers attend the shows with groups of male fans or musicians as well as other den mother types, while band whores are almost always considered as an appendage to boyfriends attending the shows, often considered not authentic or true to the EMM scene.

Although it is generally understood that these two modes of presentation for women exist within the scene, I witnessed space for a third interpretation of dress. Again, during several of my outings, I encountered women who attended shows by themselves. They were dressed in what can only be described as non-descript clothing; shirts that were plain, fitted for women but not tight, jeans that were not black, and regular shoes – nothing to overly indicate sexuality. This third manner of style did not conform to either den mother or band whore labels and I would argue that this small percentage of women do not play the game of negotiating gender in order to participate. Moreover, they did not display other markers of conformity like use of masculine language. They did not say "dude" or reinforce sexist discourse when asked about what they thought regarding other women's representation in the local scene. This was additionally evidenced with the online comments I received like the following:

I think women are treated really no differently from any other sort of fan. (Anonymous, age 25)

Every year there are more and more women at metal concerts, so I think the gender equality changes we've seen in general society are making their way to Extreme Metal as well. (Anonymous, age 32)

We are few and far between. I think there is a tendency to focus on their gender as a way of promoting women in metal, which I think can be counterproductive. It raises women's profile in metal, but it kind of places
the focus on their gender in a way that treats them as a novelty. (Amelia, age 19)

Like one of the guys. (Maryann, age 46)

I think women are represented however they choose to represent themselves. There are women who use their appearance, performance style, lyrics, etc. (Appel, age 18)

From these answers, it seems that some women do not conform to notions of rearranging, transforming, or correcting their bodies in order to fully participate in the scene (Bordo 1997). This non-conformity then becomes a liberating experience and offers a liminal space away from normative restrictions. I call this third group the invisible women. They're a growing presence in the scene, but outside of it the general public would never identify them as extreme metalters, and even within, their presence is a surprise to the typical fans. A general reading of them could be that they are women who feel no need to conform to either of the stereotypes existing in the subculture, which in part can be due to age. Most of these women I saw were no longer in their teens or early twenties, but ranging from their mid-30s and on. What's unclear is whether this is regional or a side-effect of the urban landscape that is New York City.

While the more prominent women within EMM can be looked at as having appropriated masculine identifiers with regard to dress or voice, like performers Jo Bench (Bolt Thrower), Lesely Wolf (Mortals), Mallika Sundaramurthy (Abnormality), Som Pulijmers (ex-Cerebral Bore), Kat Katz (Agoraphobic Nosebleed) and Jessica Pimental (Alekhine’s Gun), this is still rare, and, as is often the case within EMM, very few female musicians and vocalists enlist these type of male-coded characteristics. Female musicians and vocalists in general have long been relegated to support instrumentalists, playing the
bass or keyboards as well as adhering to operatic or classical vocal, characteristics traditionally coded as feminine in the overall musical canon. Those who have appropriated masculine identifiers but also extol feminist virtues, like Jasmine Shadrack of Denigrata, Karyn Crisis of Crisis/Gospel of the Witches and Amalie Bruun of Myrkur, are relatively scarce when contrasted with their quieter, support counterparts.

**Gendered Behaviors: Observations from the pit**

At the shows I attended, I observed mostly men taking part in mosh pit or circle pit activities. Mosh pits are areas that form in the middle of an audience crowd during concerts. The behaviors observed have been studied and defined as having a collective motion within which moshers (participants) move aggressively about in a sometimes circular yet undirected and aggressive manner, so as to physically and bodily engage with other moshers (Silverberg et al. 2013).

As an onlooker, these instances of individuals colliding and interacting can best be described visually as people ramming against each other using either their shoulders or heads and then their bodies as secondary impact. One can imagine how unsafe and violent this practice is, and yet, at most extreme metal shows that I have attended, I have observed about 1 to 3 women, out of a crowd of dozens of males, who participated in this behavior. It can be seen as a ritual performance in the subculture, as I’ve never met a man or woman within the scene who did not cite that they had at least once in their lifetime participated. In "Embracing the Chaos," Riches (2011) points out how the very space in which moshing occurs can act as a liminal space for taking pleasure in a subcultural practice, and, for the women I interviewed, this was indeed again the case.
Bodily, the actions seem representative of groups of individuals fighting. Yet an awareness of the fine line between violence and order exists (Berger 1999b:71). Oftentimes, individuals can be found on the outskirts of the mosh pit, cross-armed and holding guard. This stance offers a boundary for those participating and those who are not.

The behaviors of the women that I witnessed participating in moshing did not seem to conform to the normative accepted behavior of women in the larger social context (i.e. women are to avoid engaging in violent acts, they are docile, embodying a passive nature). To me, these women did not exemplify the "weaker" sex, and in fact, at some shows, seemed to behave more aggressively than the men present within the mosh pits. The simple actions of moshing could therefore be construed as performing gender. In what could be construed as an act of usurpation, women who participated in the arena of moshing disrupted the homosocial bonding that men perceive when participating. Though some women mentioned being aware of their safety at shows, many concluded that this was no different had they been participating in other activities like going to a bar or another type of musical function. Some cited that they often stayed in groups of reliable friends.

In her study on female performance with the rock band Hole, Eileraas (1997) discusses how using unladylike behavior and adopting masculine conduct within a musically misogynistic context can serve as a form of empowerment for a woman. This same process enables a form of resistance and appropriation to occur in defining and negotiating one’s gender in EMM. It alters the definition of one’s gender role, inverting “a set of expectations about what behaviors are appropriate for people of one gender” and
allowing for women to transgress such labels (Eileraas 1997). This certainly seemed to be the case in almost all my interviews. Women stated the following with regard to what drew them to the EMM scene, answers which implicitly did not align with notions of the submissive female:

Primarily the musicianship and a desire to hear things in music that are done in few other genres of guitar and drum based music, such as polyrhythm, odd time signatures, counterpoint, tonal harmony, atonal sounds, and various instrumental acrobatics (tapping, sweep arpeggios, high tempo songs, etc). (Anonymous, age 25)

the community and the aggressiveness [sic] (Carolina, age 30)

The adrenalin, the freedom that can be expressed musically and lyrically (Anonymous, age 45)

the never-ending search for "something heavier". also, riffs :) i should probably also note the strong sentiment against religion - perhaps a stronger sentiment than in other forms of metal. it's something that i do appreciate in my music a lot. [sic] (Anonymous, age 26)

The collective energy felt between the performers and the audience. (Appel, age 18)

I enjoy very rhythmic, percussive music. I like the feeling extreme heaviness gives the body in a live setting. I find the emotional content cathartic. (Kris, age 35)

At first glance, the descriptors used by the women I surveyed could easily be coded as masculine, with words like ‘aggression’, ‘extreme’, ‘strong’, ‘percussive’, ‘heaviness’, and ‘adrenalin’ appearing to be linguistically engendered and very much reinforcing masculine musical ideals. Yet, like with scholar Rosemary Hill’s fieldwork, in which she explored how women challenge hard rock and metal as masculine music, this is a simplistic reading of such answers. Hill writes:
…It would appear that my interviewees were rejecting femininity associated with pop music whilst celebrating masculinity. This looks problematic: by asserting rock’s value to the detriment of pop, culture that is associated with women is positioned as being less valuable and women as producers, artists, and enjoyers of culture are seen as less important. Thus the idea that only men have something important to say, be it artistically or politically, is maintained, feeding into the endurance of women’s subordination. (Hill 2012)

In this regard, women haven’t been given ample space to define their listening reasons other than using the inherent language of an already established masculine musical hegemony.

On the flip side, one example that doesn’t conform to a masculine inscription was the common use of the words "community" and "collective" to describe why my interviewees listened to EMM. A handful of women commented on meeting up with friends, both male and female, at shows as a social experience. Likewise, they commented on a band’s ability to emote, what Hill in her study called an “affiliation”, or musical type of intimacy from musician to fan. This type of listening definition aligns itself with more of a feminine reading, not at all conforming to traditional masculine notions of why one would listen to the EMM. This emotive intimacy is a quality that gets coded as feminine, pointing to pre-existing notions of "gender related anxieties" based on ascribing masculine versus feminine manifestations in music (McClary 1991:18).

**Individual Interviews - Highlights**

The one-on-one interviews that I conducted took place during September 2014 through December 2014 and were with women who identified as musicians, photographers, music critics, and music personalities within the scene. I conducted a total of 8 interviews, in person and via email. However, out of my in-person interviews, two
young women stood out as providing the most informative and insightful perspectives: Annie and Justina.

**Annie**

The first of these two women is Annie Buchwald. I had no prior relationship with the participant and found this to be the best strategy for introducing me to the perspectives of young female musicians within EMM. Thus, my questions surrounding gender and feminism were pertinent in understanding why women such as Annie would participate in the sub-culture as both a consumer and producer of its music, a unique perspective as she was not just a fan.

Annie is a 28-year-old Caucasian woman living in Manhattan. She considers herself a Manhattan native as she has attended elementary and high school in the city. We met through the online survey portion of my research which included a field to indicate that if participants would like to be personally interviewed they should leave their email address. Annie was one of the first to request further contact. Our interview session lasted about one hour in which we spoke about a variety of issues, including gender, women in EMM, and her experiences regarding being a female musician within the New York’s EMM scene. Annie is currently a drummer for two extreme metal bands in New York that play death metal.

Interestingly, although male fans typically vastly outnumber women in the death metal sub-genre, the New York tri-state EMM scene reflects a different pattern - almost half of the audience present at shows which I attended were women. Women are appearing at shows as both fans and producers within the industry in varying professions and roles, such as musicians, writers, photographers, etc. I believe that New York is
unique and offers women who participate in EMM varying opportunities that are not often seen within the sub-culture. This is partly due to New York's diversity, population, and overall openness with regard to music as it has been noted to be the birthplace of diverse genres like jazz, hip-hop, hardcore, and new-wave music, etc.

**Annie as a fan**

Annie’s background is grounded in the arts and she considers herself to have been influenced by both of her parents. Her father teaches art at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, and her mother is a Pulitzer Prize awardee and Modern Languages and Literature professor at Bard College. She related to me, with some humor, that she is the first in her family to specialize in a subject outside of the arts. She is a young, educated woman with a Bachelors degree in Russian studies. She has been accepted to the Physical Therapy doctorate program at Columbia University and began her semester there this past fall. We met up one afternoon to conduct my interview after her class. My first impression of her was that she was a bright young woman who articulated her thoughts concisely.

Annie related the first time she became aware of heavy metal music and extreme metal music. She told me a story in which she was away at a music camp when she was 13 and first encountered what she deemed as “different” music, as she quotes, listening to the band In Flames and saying, “What is that?” It was evident by the pitch in her voice that this was a moment of wonder in her adolescence which she looks back fondly to. She went on to tell me that hearing this type of music was an enlightening experience because "no one else was listening to it, especially other girls" (Buchwald, personal communication 2014). Her statement is telling as it confirms Annie's position on behaving against the normative behavior of girls her age. She understands that her
listening pleasure does not coincide with other girls her age. I asked her what, if any, 
negative experiences she had from listening to music of this type, being that she was a 
girl and this was not what girls at her school were listening to. She told me it was mostly 
ok, that she was tagged as “that girl who listens to metal,” but she didn't receive either 
good or bad reactions to it.

She also mentioned liking the death metal band Death, who were mentioned 
earlier in this thesis and how Chuck Schuldiner, the band's chief composer and lyricist, 
was able to write about so many life-related topics. Chuck had written songs about 
betrayal, death, and the soul. She said that Chuck's band was, “perhaps one of the many 
virtues of metal music, that allows it be so transgressive. It plays to a morbid curiosity 
that as humans we all have” Buchwald, personal communication 2014). Death’s later 
lyrical content was almost always a commentary on the human condition and not 
thematically related to rape or violence towards women, a misogynist trend prevalent in the 
lyrics of many other death metal bands. A strong transition can be seen from their 
earliest album, Scream Bloody Gore, to their later works. From her answers, I found that 
Annie's participation as a fan of the EMM scene had much to do with her feelings of 
empowerment from the aggressive music. She did not seem to regard it as engendered for 
one sex over the other, although she understood that it would not appeal to most women.

**Annie as Musician/Drummer**

I asked Annie if she was always musically adept, as it seems she already had such 
an artistic family, and she told me that in actuality she was a late bloomer when it came 
to playing music. She didn't pick up an instrument until she was 20. So in total, she has 
only been playing drums for about eight years.
She always gravitated towards sounds that were “heavy” and what she describes as anything with “groove and driving beats.” She said that as a child she grew up with mostly what her father listened to, which was folk music of the Nordic persuasion. It wasn't until her adolescence that she grew intrigued with more heavy, aggressive beats. She said that as a teen, she was never one of the hot or popular kids; she was an average teen who found her niche in listening to what was already “outsider” music. Going back to school and being into something, and having a good sense of humor, put her in a good place and so she says she was treated pretty fairly. She does relate a story about one other girl who was into something different — gothic music. They were friends and would go to shows together, but she cites that the other girl was more into “hooking up” at shows. Annie said that this is the other type of fan/listener, validating both Weinstien and Vasan’s earlier assessments about the two categories to which women must adhere while participating in the EMM scene. Annie seems to fall in the ‘den mother’ category in that her purpose to going to shows is tied to her interest in the music alone, not as a venue for romantic relationships.

Annie feels that because she is bright, intelligent and exudes good energy, it rules out prejudices that she may face. She said one challenge, however, is that when she calls a male band-mate out on a mistake in how they are playing, such as timing, she automatically gets dubbed “bitch” but guys can call out other guys and it can be ok, indicative of the double-standard at play. In addition, males who do not play well are dubbed “bad players” based on their skill level, whereas females seem to get de-valued based on their gender alone, suggesting an ascribing of “otherness” that their lack of skill
is due to “being” a girl. Therefore, just “being” a girl results in assignment to a lower status in musicianship, a devaluation based on Annie’s observations.

She also thinks that communication can be challenging between male and female members in a band. For one, she feels that women have to stand up for themselves more often, that there is a “learning curve” in that male members are not used to women speaking/talking in certain ways, especially if its aggressive, denoting perceptions of what is acceptable behavior based on gender (Buchwald, personal communication 2014). She thinks it may be due to social conditioning — that certain qualities could be testosterone-driven type of music and so certain people are driven to it, mainly men.

I asked her about her role in her band; did she felt like she contributed in a significant way. She said yes, she has full control over what she plays, and that her band creates the music cohesively by each writing parts and seeing how they fit together. They do this using the application Garage Band on Mac computers. This highly-positive collaboration again inverts the common discourse of EMM being a strictly male environment and one that is unfriendly to women.

Annie and Feminism

Annie believes that the girls already into metal music “will be more aggressive in some way, whether they are trying to defend more masculine tendencies, or maybe trying to defend more feminine sexuality; own it more, trying to own something” (Buchwald, personal communication 2014). She said that for her, there are advantages to being a female in the EMM scene and even more advantages of being a female drummer in the EMM scene due to its rarity. She related a story about being late to band practice and how when she finally arrived, her male bandmates start to rant at her, but then she told
them she was late doing “women things” in the bathroom, which immediately stopped the conversation and let her off the hook. Her experience highlights the touchiness of being a woman in a male environment and men's discomfort with any kind of discussion of femininity.

She brought up heterosexuality and that she is straight. This is important to distinguish her from a negative perception that she feels women get if they are gay and participating in the scene. Being a gay woman places the female participant in the scene in a more masculine position because they are perceived to be more like men due to sexual preference. She said that she has a boyfriend, and she finds it funny when she dates guys who don’t really listen to metal. She believes she listens to heavier music than her current boyfriend. She also feels that a lot of the women in the scene who are not musicians participate in order to meet guys that they like. This again attempts to situate two types of female participants emerging from within the EMM scene: true female fans and women who are only interested in the men, like groupies. I asked if she would identify herself as a feminist, and she had a very interesting answer that was both a 'yes' and a 'no'. She said that as she has gotten older, that “girl on girl maliciousness” is more of an issue than just guys being malicious towards women. The sub-context I was reading from her answer seemed to convey a sense of reluctance to say “I’m a feminist” because of concern over what feminism could mean and what she thought it meant. In some ways, her implied reluctance seemed to suggest what feminist reporter Emily Shire so aptly writes, “Feminism gets a bad rap, and people perceive the movement as meaning something very narrow and specific and negative,” confirming the complications and
confusions when explaining personal feminist views (Buchwald, personal communication 2014).

Finally, Annie related to me one last challenge of being a woman and musician. She sees growing older as another problem for female musicians. She said that she will eventually want to have kids and get married. She thinks it’s hard to envision her future doing those things and still being in a band, that it’s tough. It brings to mind the dilemma of many women who want to work and have children but find it difficult to do both. This issue, an important one in which further research could benefit, shows the differences in what male and female musicians encounter when existing in bands regarding touring schedules, safety, and treatment. One can speculate that new parenthood might be less of an issue for men than for women.

**Justina**

Following my interview with Annie, I met with Justina Villanueva, a creative concert photographer from New Jersey. Justina is 29-year-old Latina woman of Puerto Rican and Colombian descent. She considers herself a New Jerseyan, born and bred. Her ethnic background falls into the second-largest ethnicity from my survey findings of Hispanic/Latina demographics, which was the next largest ethnicity after Caucasians.

Not surprisingly, for women in the EMM scene, I found that because there is generally a small ratio of women-to-men, most key women in the scene had passing knowledge of one another. In Justina’s case, she had already known some of my other interviewees from her work photo-documenting women in the New York’s EMM scene. Her engaging photography project called “Extreme Women” on her website Basements & Blastbeats was extremely helpful in my research as it paved the way for me in
recruiting other women for interviews and conversations. In fact, her photography is exemplary in visually depicting the various ethnicities, personalities, and demographics that exist with women in New York’s EMM scene.

**Justina as a fan**

Justina related to me that she was about 12 years old when she was first exposed to heavy metal music. It’s a vivid memory for her that she had found 89.5 WSOU, a popular college radio station from Seton Hall University in New Jersey that played metal. She said she heard the song “Walk” by the band Pantera and it was this moment that she found the heaviness in music she was looking for, a sort of toughness that did not come from the hip hop music in her 85% Latino community. From this point on, Justina began exploring more of metal and what it had to offer.

I asked her what, if any, were the reactions of her friends and community. She relayed to me that even her very large and extended family didn’t really understand her taste in music, saying some family members thought she was a “rocker,” and believing that bands like Red Hot Chili Peppers were what she listened to. Not surprisingly, and reflected in other studies done on social group formations, social groups in her high school splintered off into cliques labeled as "preppy kids," "goth girls," etc. (Villanueva, personal communication 2014). For Justina, it wasn’t until her late teen years that she found other people who enjoyed metal music as much as she did. As far as genres of EMM, Justina listens to grindcore, death, deathgrind and cites bands like Opeth, Death, and Dillinger Escape Plan as her personal favorites within metal.
Justina as a photographer

Justina’s occupation came up when I asked her if she was a musician, to which she replied, “No, I’ve always been the girl with the camera” (Villanueva, personal communication 2014). I asked her how her concert photography came about, and she told me that it wasn’t until she was in college and had changed her major to Broadcasting. As part of a class assignment, she was told to create a segment and chose metal as her theme. From her segment, she ended up meeting a bunch of bands with whom she remained good friends, and she started touring with one of them as a photographer. Justina believes this to be a turning point where she really delved into her photography and where she started to shoot for newspapers, magazines etc.

I asked whether her gender ever seemed to play a role or affect this aspect of her EMM life, and Justina told me that she didn’t think that it ever played into it, that most guys just looked at her as really into the music. She actually does relate how one guy from the band she toured with was like a big brother. He was a initially a stranger to her, but later he became a sort of surrogate brother and made her feel safe during their tour.

Interestingly, in terms of photography work, Justina says that she sees more men getting by-lines than women, and that its mostly men who are associated with the photo attributes. This, she takes to mean that it's mostly men who are getting paid for these photo shoots. She said that there aren’t many women that are getting respected professionally by magazines. I asked if she thought that men were getting by-lines over her for any particular reasons and she said, “It’s not even that—it’s like the women aren’t even seen. They're not even there. So it’s not even a thing like, 'We don’t like you' ---it’s more of, 'we don’t even see you.' We’re invisible” (Villanueva, personal communication
2014). This invisibility points to a deeper issue of female professional photographers and the lack of recognition they receive in the EMM subculture. It is troubling to think that while women and their numbers increase within EMM as both fans and producers, their presence can so easily be dismissed as to not factor in at all.

**Justina and Feminism**

Whereas Annie seemed to hesitate in her identification as feminist, Justina was the opposite. She assuredly conveyed her feminism and, in fact, stated that, “there’s definitely a desire for it right now in EMM” (Villanueva, personal communication 2014). She relayed to me that as much as she loves death metal and bands like Cannibal Corpse and bands with violent imagery, she said, “Why is it always towards women? Why do I have to get fucked with a knife? Why is it about us?” And, "What’s the hatred towards women, ya know?” (Villanueva, personal communication 2014). Indeed, her questions point to the recognition by some women within the scene who reflect on the controversy with lyrical content. She says,

…It’s weird 'cause you go to a lot of shows, and you have a lot of friends that are guys, and that animosity isn’t there, ya know?-you know like personally but it’s in the lyrics-so it’s like where’s the lie? And every now and then you’ll be at a show, and you’re like, this is really uncomfortable —like please don’t call every women in the room a bitch. I mean, we’re eventually going to be the mother of your children—a little bit of respect—just something. I’m a person. [sic]  (Villanueva, personal communication 2014)

Another case that points to offensiveness towards women within EMM is a story Justina related to me about the band Mastodon. She spoke about how much of a fan she was of this band but said that, as of late, much controversy has surrounded them. In particular, Mastodon’s controversial t-shirt which depicted a Native American woman kneeling and about to be shot by a white, male pilgrim (see figure 9 below). Justina tells
me that when fans cried out about it, Mastodon replied, in Justina’s words, “well, you know what, it happened ("it" referencing white imperialism over Native Americans) so we have the right to put this art out there,” basically telling fans to deal with it and that they aren’t racist (Villanueva, personal communication 2014). Such dismissiveness from Mastodon towards their fans left an uneasy feeling with Justina.

In addition, back in 2013, a Native American female fan by the name Erica Violet Lee penned an open letter to the band regarding it’s offensiveness towards the Native American community. In it she writes,

Metal and hard rock music are still viewed as the domain of straight white men – I’ll assume you don’t need proof of this beyond the sausagefest crowd at an average metal show. But there’s [sic] plenty of us who don’t fit that category and still want to feel at home in your music. This shirt does the opposite of that for me as an Indigenous woman.

I want to believe that the shirt was designed with the intent of trying to disrupt the lie of American Thanksgiving; a holiday based on the story of Pilgrims and Indians coming together and sharing a nice meal, when in reality what occurred was genocide. And of course, a critical element of “conquering” Indigenous people used in the United States and Canada is the rape and enslavement of Native women.

I want to believe that you knew all of that when you approved this shirt.

But there are better ways to make political statements than printing t-shirts with disturbing imagery that reinforces racist myths rather than challenging them. Indigenous women are not (and never have been) subservient, silent, compliant, helpless on our knees, always ready and willing in buckskin bikinis – but that is how we are viewed, and this image contributes to an already bursting repository of that crap. (Lee 2013)

Mastodon’s response to Lee’s letter was to say that they had a sick sense of humor but were not racist, altogether ignoring Lee’s call to stop selling the t-shirts on their website. The controversy underlies a real problem in metal with regard to responsibility and influence. When Mastodon received backlash because of this, they
chose to reinforce the white hegemonic masculinity that metal has been built upon and disregard others offended by their creative decisions. Being called out for being racist, misogynist and homophobic in metal threatens the status quo and is met with others being labeled “inauthentic” to the scene. Instead of being inclusive and acknowledging their diverse fans, such incidents like this serve to deter more people away from EMM scene and further confirms the issues that women, women of color, and other minorities face when trying to participate. In the end, the incident left Justina questioning her fandom.

Figure 9 – Mastodon T-Shirt

Source: https://lefthandhorror.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/mastodon_642x388_2888.jpg?w=620&h=374
Accessed February 23, 2014
3. VIGILANTE FEMINISM

The Women of Castrator

Tightly she holds the blade  
With which the rapist will be raped  
Castration  
Of the rapist!  
Emasculation

| Tied her up and taped her mouth shut  
| Couldn't scream,  
| Raped violently  
| Rope tight  
| Around her throat  
| Her body twitches as she chokes

As mentioned on page 27, Castrator is an all-female band from New York who play death metal, one of the styles blanketed in the extreme metal category. I interviewed two members of the band, Carolina Perez (drums) and Mikaela Akesson (guitars). The other members consist of M.S. (vocals), P.S. (guitars) and R.M. (bass) (see figure 10).

Figure 10 – Members of NY based band, Castrator

Though New York-based, members of Castrator hail from countries like Sweden, Norway, and Mexico. Not only do these women represent a multiplicity of ethnicities,

---

they are a rarity with regard to actively choosing to create an all-female line-up, largely unique in the EMM scene. I could only think of a handful of other all-female bands but their lyrical content is rarely feminist in context. With Castrator, the band’s gender construction allows the women to create a space in metal in which expectations of gendered identity either fall by the wayside or become fuel for songwriting. The experience of performance for them paves the way to transgressing masculine space and sexualized gender tropes and subverting the normative patriarchy of the scene, rather than reinforcing it. As Jasmine Shadrack writes, “For women in Death Metal, the choice to either accept or deny constructs of femininity and ‘sexiness’ exists as polemics; to acknowledge the male gaze or to reject it can act as primary signification of maneuverability within the scene” (Shadrack 2013).

Castrator’s name already plays with an inversion of meaning and parody. The word ‘castrator’, meaning to render impotent, literally or metaphorically, by psychological means, especially by threatening a person's masculinity or femininity, imbues the band with a form of agency and power. Choosing such a name adheres to the EMM convention of naming bands using words related to themes of gore, horror, and death. Examples like Cannibal Corpse, Carcass, Cattle Decapitation, Decapitated, Dying Fetus, Gorguts, Immolation, Massacre, Napalm Death, Suffocation, Terrorizer or Visceral Bleeding abound within the scene. In addition, the name Castrator responds explicitly to existing misogynist bands names like Nunslayer, Prostitute Disfigurement, Anal Cunt, etc.

Moreover, in choosing Castrator as the band’s name, it irrevocably ties itself with a feminist aesthetic harkening to the DIY and punk bands seen during the Riot Grrrl
movement, and a sort of re-invention of the 1970s LA feminist punk band, Castration Squad. Castration Squad was made up of members Shannon Wilhelm and Dinah Cancer and featuring a rotating list of prominent female punkers like Alice Bag, Elissa Bello, Tiffany Kennedy Tracy Lea to name a few (Facebook, Inc. 2012).

The Riot Grrrl movement, which originated in the Pacific Northwest in the United States, is an interesting tie-in to what seems to be occurring in the EMM scene today. Though no outright EMM feminist "movement" seems to be rising, the correlation that Castrator’s involvement harkens is evident. The Riot Grrrl movement, which occurred during the early 90s, paved the way for women in the punk DIY sub-culture to explore and transgress their boundaries via music by performing in a manner that was typically regarded as masculine. The movement is viewed as having sprung from the issues and concerns that dominated third wave feminism thought and activism, coupled with punk aesthetics and political attitudes. Problems such as patriarchy, racism, rape, and abuse were hot topics for writing and musical lyrics, as was movements related to equality and female empowerment. This mirrors Castrator’s position within EMM.

Riot Grrrls challenged much of the masculine punk ideology of the era. Bands like The Raincoats, Poly Styrene, and Bikini Kill emerged with lyrical content and performances that rallied for equal treatment and empowering spaces where women could create and participate in the punk scene. The movement served as a gateway for women to challenge and safely explore their gender boundaries and do so in subversive ways, directing their anger and expression through lyrical and behavioral output. It became a forum for reacting to the implicit sexism occurring within punk, ironically, a scene inherently anti-establishment.
My experience with women in New York’s EMM scene echoed some of these feelings of transgression. Both subcultures have double standards that exist with regard to physical appearance and sexual activity, whereby labels of “groupie” and “slut” act as descriptors for female participants and not the males of each scene (Leblanc 1999). In each scene, women's authenticity is tested more stringently than men's with regard to their knowledge of the music as well as with their musical skill level compared to their male musician counterparts, where hearing “she plays pretty good for a girl” is a normal occurrence.

While naming the band Castrator fits naturally with the death metal image of morbidity and the grotesque, with women behind the name it gains a new appropriation, hinting at the inverted expression of female masculinities and taking away “male power” from the male-dominated scene (Halberstam 1998). This becomes even more evident when analyzing the band’s lyrical content.

The songs from Castrator’s May 2015 EP *No Victim* continue to transgress the EMM genre. Their lyrical content is in direct opposition to the current masculinized death metal hegemony and yet adheres stylistically to the genre’s sound. An example of this can be found in the lyrics to the title track, “No Victim,” which tells the tale of a man’s attempted rape of a woman. The tale is told from the woman's perspective (completely unique for this genre) in which thoughts of being “always in fear” and “trying to be brave” position the woman as a victim. However, as the end approaches, the discourse undergoes a complete reversal - the woman overpowers her attacker, takes his knife and ends his life, “The knife from his hand she grabs, stabbing him multiple times.” When I asked Carolina (founder/drummer) about her thoughts behind writing this song, she said,
“Every woman has the fear of being raped and it shouldn’t be like that,” indicating a reaction to a fear specifically faced by a majority of women (Perez, personal communication 2014).

There are, in fact, many death metal songs penned by men glorifying rape. Some graphic titles include Cannibal Corpse's "Fucked With a Knife," "Stripped, Raped and Strangled," and the magniloquent "Entrails Ripped from a Virgin's Cunt." During her interview, Carolina said that with Castrator she wanted to show the EMM community that women “could play as brutal and as fast,” and that “they like death metal music for what it is” (Perez, personal communication 2014). This mode of practice allows Castrator to destabilize the gender norms of EMM by reclaiming masculine space for their own. With further examination of their lyrics, in particular their track “Emasculator,” we again see Castrator evoking a shift of power by referencing the extreme act of castration of the rapist:

Vigilante women on the loose
Instruments of vengeance
Balance Restorers
The hunter will be hunted
Spirits of their victims rejoice
No longer will they endure

Tightly she holds the blade
With which the rapist will be raped

Castration
Of the rapist!
Emasculation
Take his weapon!
Castration
Crush and cut the balls!
Emasculation
Oriectomy!
Failed by the legal system
Designed and built for men
Exacting revenge in their own way

Form a line of prisoners
   Led up one by one
Leaving genital parts behind
   Penile amputation
   Remove the weapon
   From the offender

Form a line of prisoners

All of these songs are performed in a manner adhering to what Bogue has
described vocals to be within the extreme metal genre; “Death metal vocal style deepens-
and hence hypermasculinizes the voice, but to the point where it ceases to sound human,
resembling instead some “unspecific animal or machine” (Bogue 1996:107). This vocal
technique becomes another way that Castrator navigates masculine territory by
employing growled death metal vocals that have traditionally been male-coded. The
women here are not trying to be men; they are simply adhering to EMM conventions.
Here, the voice of Castrator’s vocalist, M.S., is almost undistinguishable from that of a
male vocalist singing the same lyrics. Her guttural delivery challenges the assumption of
how women are perceived and should sound, therefore inverting the discourse of what is
typically described as “hypermasculine” because she chooses to sing in the genre's
typical vocal style, i.e., death growls, shrieking, guttural vocals instead of a more
identifiable and traditionally feminine clean female vocal style. M.S. is reclaiming the
voice as a medium and allowing for liberation from gender.

Simply existing as an all-female death metal band who adhere to the prevailing
masculine code of performance allows Castrator to disrupt and refute their marginalized
status in the hegemonic environment of death metal. Together, their aesthetic displays a type of performance that D’Amore (2015) has coined, *vigilante feminism*; the use of violence by women in some way, shape or form (in this case through lyrical content and musical style) to fight back against their attackers for self-empowerment. It is an act which reclaims both space and value for these women and shows that they have the potential to perform on an equal playing field as men. By performing vigilante feminism, Castrator has changed the dialogue put forth by their Riot Grrrl predecessors – they are adopting violence in their lyrics to not only convey power but also as a form of protection. These women are no longer the imagined victims that the death metal genre has historically portrayed them to be.

**Unquestionable Presence**⁹: Race among NY Female Extreme Metallers

In New York’s melting pot, extreme metal has always enjoyed a level of racial diversity, from older death metal acts like Suffocation boasting African American members to newer extreme metal bands like Alekhine’s Gun and Castrator. It is projected that by 2060, whites will no longer be the dominant race in the US. Minorities are expected to comprise 57% of the populace by then (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

There is already a substantial Hispanic/Latino presence living in the New York City area and taking part in the extreme metal community, both as producers and consumers. Within this global context, EMM’s cross-cultural spread can no longer be solely defined by its "whiteness" alone (Pillipov 2012: 66). In fact, its growing female listenership and cultural diversification encourages the expansion of the genre in different

---

directions, such as the inclusion of feminine and feminist points of view in lyrical content, with a similar revisionist evolution from Latino and black songwriters and the potential for a variety of racially-diverse instrumental influences from the smorgasbord of New York’s resident musicians.

When I conducted my survey, there was a significant presence of Hispanics and Latinos (male and female) in the audience of the shows I attended. Depending on the specific show and size, a variety of mixed-ethnic groupings were present. At times this was in the form of interracial couples or groupings of friends. For example, the Death DTA show, which featured the bands Massacre, Obituary and Rivers of Nihil - bands that are fairly well-known and popular within the death metal scene - drew a large audience from the New York tri-state area. The concert was, in fact, held at the PlayStation Theater in Times Square, which is a large venue known for accommodating more popular metal acts like thrashers Anthrax and Testament and Denmark's iconic heavy metal act, King Diamond. Such a large venue inevitably drew a crowd that reflected NYC’s inherent demographics. Although there were more men than women, women represented almost half of the audience. I witnessed a racial variety, with Hispanic/Latino women being the largest group present after Caucasians. Other groups present were Asians and blacks although they were considerably lower in count than the white and Hispanic/Latino women there.

Both Walser (1993) and Arnett (1996) find that fans of metal tend to be overwhelmingly white. This is still true in light of metal’s global reach. New York, in particular, tends to show audiences comprised of half-white and half-other (Hispanic/Latino/Asian/African American). When compared to studies on women in
EMM scenes that previous metal scholars have conducted, there are, naturally, some similarities and differences. The participants in the New York tri-state area that I interviewed all recognized the noticeable presence of Hispanic/Latino women in the scene as fans and musicians, very much in keeping with what Vasan (2010) witnessed in her regional study in Houston, Texas. My own observations validated that Hispanics were almost as numerous at the shows which I attended, in contrast with studies from Canada (Kitteringham 2014) and the United Kingdom (Hill 2012) in which whites were more overwhelmingly the majority female race.

When I asked my participants what they saw in terms of race at shows in New York, they had a mixed bag of responses; a third of women indicated that they noticed whites outnumbering every other race at shows. Another third indicated the heavy presence of Hispanics and Latinos, while the final third indicated that they actually didn’t notice or look for race and that, if anything, it was probably just as diverse as New York’s overall demographics. The last answer was telling as it alludes to a type of New York exceptionalism (Brown 2016), whereby most outsiders perceive NYC to be very diverse due to its urbanity.

Often a mistaken aspect of benevolence, the statement of being colorblind or race-blind can be counterproductive towards inclusivity. Race theorists have long argued that by ignoring racial differences, people reify racism in ways that continue to marginalize minorities and their experiences (Wingfield 2015). In essence, colorblindness supports the larger racial injustices happening in society by not acknowledging difference, which is a key element of political and social injustice. Discrimination still exists and finds ways to function both outright and overtly as an ideology that legitimizes actions towards
minorities like the mistreatment of women of color in metal. For example, one interviewee by the name of Kim Gill, who self-identified as a 27-year-old black woman and EMM journalist, said the following with regard to having had a negative experience during a show:

My first Cannibal Corpse show, I was approached by a White man who worked up the courage to tell me that he thought that I was in "the wrong place." He went as far as to question me as to whether or not I listened to Cannibal Corpse as to which I replied to him "I just saw them perform." When I questioned him about why he'd even ask me, he couldn't even answer with a straight face and chalked it up to "it's because you're too pretty." [sic]

And,

Being a woman, people tend to write you off as if you don't know anything about the music. Me being a Black woman, people write me off at the door. I can't count how many times I've been questioned by security working at venues about whether or not I was a fan of the music, to which I would have to take the time to explain to them about the artist who was playing the event and give them a brief history about them.

Kim went on to explain that being a black woman in the industry who happens to love EMM has often garnered her looks when attending shows. In general, she believes that treatment can vary based on gender and race and that, luckily for the most part, she has garnered respect and cultivated friendships with both the men and women in the community.

In addition, in Laina Dawes' book *What Are You Doing Here?, A Woman’s Life and Liberation in Heavy Metal*, Dawes documents black women reporting that they experienced feelings of fear regarding their safety at attending certain shows. Although my own study did not find many women citing worries over safety, they did cite it as a concern, dependent on the location of the venue, hinting that outside of city venues, the likeliness of feeling unwelcomed or unsafe based on their race or gender was higher.
when the venue was situated in a more rural area. Moreover, Dawes writes about how black women’s bodies are policed and manipulated by the music industry to better sell an image of sexuality.

Hypersexualized images of black women in metal serve to perpetuate an ideology in which it’s seemingly acceptable to objectify black women on the basis of their appearance. These types of portrayals dismiss racial and historical politics that can be inherently embedded in the imagery, a point missed yet again in a controversial music video produced for a song by the previously mentioned band, Mastodon. Their video for “The Motherload” featured a group of black Atlanta women who twerk and dance in front of the band.

While the portrayal of black women as hypersexualized dancers in music videos is not a new development, as this is the way they are frequently portrayed in pop and hip-hop music videos, the fact that they are twerking for a white heavy metal band gives the viewer a different, more objectified reading: such a strong racial emphasis between the white band and the black dancers has rarely, if ever, been seen in a heavy metal music video. There have been videos that objectify women in heavy metal in the past, particularly with white women in the 1980s, but this sexualizing of women in extreme metal videos is relatively rare, although the brutalizing of women is far more rampant in videos for death metal and goregrind acts. In general, music videos from extreme metal bands from New York do not feature hypersexualized imagery of women. In fact, women don’t have a strong focus in their videos at all. Female-driven extreme metal bands from New York, such as Castrator, tend to have videos with footage taken from live shows, as
do their male-centric counterparts, so artificial portrayals of women are not overly present.

Heavy metal, like rock, has drawn upon inherent African-American roots with regard to musical performance, and so by appropriating these black women dancers, expression is constructed through a white male lens and understanding of masculinity (Mahon 2004:204-205). When members of Mastodon were interviewed and asked about the problematic portrayal of their dancers, they denied seeing any sexism or racial issues at all (Gordon 2014). In an interview on the matter with Laina Dawes conducted by artist and metal scholar Kristen Sollee, Dawes states:

Besides the fact that the majority of women who are seen in metal videos are almost always in hyper-sexualized positions, there is a real issue in terms of the credibility of non-white women in metal, as performers and also working behind-the-scenes in the metal scene, so to see women of colour in a video – in a derogatory position – is a slap in the face. (Sollee 2015)

Shadrack adds with regard to the Mastodon video:

Another issue that comes up... is the acknowledgement of the women’s good education, as if this fact is meant to counter the use of their reified bodies in the video. Oh you’re all really well educated and doing PhDs?! How phenomenally useful that is because that really comes across in the video. That arse in my face and I’m thinking, oh I bet her Cultural Theory will be applicable here so she can deconstruct just how many fucking layers of subjugation this functions on… Barthes would be proud. If the twerking in this video were meant as some kind of rebuttal (boom!) at white women doing it (ahem, Miley!) then I really think Rihanna nailed it in her video for ‘Pour It Up’. That surely was the end of that particular ownership argument. [sic] (Shadrack, 2014)

Interestingly, at a 2015 panel at the Popular Culture Association Conference, in Chicago, scholar and professor Victoria Willis spoke in defense about this in her paper, "The Dialectic of T(werk): Hegel, Marx, and Womanist Agency in Mastodon’s "The
Motherload” video, saying that some of the dancers conveyed that they didn’t feel objectified or misrepresented in the video; for some, it was just a dance video and they were having fun. In fact, in an article posted on Revolver’s magazine website, one of the dancers came out in defense of the Mastodon video, saying, “Ask us if it was racist or sexist. We were the ones right there experiencing it. I’ll tell you from my view: no” (Jade 2014).

While the opposing reactions to Mastodon’s PR were valid, this once again points to a larger and the more complicated question of progress for women within metal. Does this type of portrayal do more harm than good for women in the scene? How do we approach and interpret artistic license and meaning? The answers remain unresolved by many women who find it hard to reconcile female objectification and fandom.

In addition, while fans can choose to reject any political agenda, metal music, like any other musical genre, as art, is subjective and whether or not a fan or artist is beyond politics doesn’t disregard that the political can be relevant. There’s much discussion in metal studies about racism and, in particular, whether metal can remain apolitical. Niall Scott has argued that “the political is often rejected in metal music in favor of a desired autonomy” (Scott 2011), that metal fans reject attaching any political or social justice agenda to their music. However, from my own listening and research of metal, there are many acts that incorporate politics into their music, from Megadeth and Sepultura to Napalm Death and Chthonic, and there are acts that take a sociological bent that borders or references the political, like Fear Factory and even Metallica and Slayer. The entire genre of grindcore comes from a largely political space, before goregrind and pornogrind developed (Dee 2009: 59-61). Acts like Carcass, Atheist and Death also merge both
political and social topics in their writings. On top of bands having political or politicized meanings attributed to their music, related media also regularly delves into these issues with websites like Metal Injection, Noisey and Vice writing articles about the social impact of EMM artists’ works and comments from fans and industry insiders documenting their opinions and reactions to these articles and their musical sources. Videos on YouTube and other vide websites, as well as blogs and even Twitter feeds are subject to the same debates.

In an article published online in Flavorwire, Dawes (2014) discusses the problematic issue of booking white supremacists and Nazi bands at venues that cater to crowds comprised of diverse races, mentioning the controversial 2014 show at The Acheron in Brooklyn in which several Nazi skinhead bands played. It was reported that some attendees left the show after seeing the lineup. Dawes writes:

And such shows can still be hostile places — for instance, a show last fall at Acheron in the extremely multi-ethnic borough Brooklyn, where the diversity of the neighborhood and the patrons did not deter the venue from hosting an Oi! skinhead show, causing some audience members to leave. Apparently Acheron’s owners were unaware that the bands featured — which included Oxblood, Offensive Weapon, Stormwatch, The Wolverines, and Maddog Surrender — were Nazi skins, but on the other hand, the show was never pre-promoted on the venue’s social media sites, and you have to ask if it’s really possible that the bookers were entirely ignorant of the bands’ politics. C’mon, Stormwatch? [sic] (Dawes 2014)

This incident serves to highlight the ongoing problematic race relations still occurring in what would be considered a diverse area of Brooklyn and questions whether event organizers should be held accountable for booking bands with racist agendas, adding to a layer of intersectionality with gender that women of color face in unsafe EMM spaces.
Black vocalist Kayla Phillips of the Nashville band Bleed the Pigs writes about the very real bigotry and racism she’s experienced in her band. In an article written for Noisey called “What Do Hardcore, Ferguson, and the ‘Angry Black Woman’ Trope All Have in Common?” Philips discusses the double standard towards angry black women in extreme musical genres that are all about aggression and how white men don’t ever get asked, “Why are you so angry?”

She writes,

We’re used and ignored in the same breath. You want me to be here, but not too much. If I speak up and it’s too real, I need to give you a lollipop afterwards, or you’ll never learn, and you’ll be too scared to talk to me again. These are ways of covering up our mouths with attempts to stifle and contain our liberation. In this subculture, that goes against what we’re here for. Our voices and existence shouldn’t be tolerated in your scene, it should be accepted. I shouldn’t have to silence myself in order to have a place here. I shouldn’t have to pretend that there are no issues. (Phillips 2014)

There is a double standard at play here in which white men don't get treated the same way when they express anger whereas women are both silenced and objectified. What my interviewees and participants shed light on was that racism and misogyny are still very much alive and thriving in the EMM scene. Accounts from my interviewees regarding their barriers to participating in EMM document the challenges that they encountered from men in the scene as well as the threat they seem to pose to the traditional masculine hegemony. Being a woman of color or being gay added extra barriers to participation.

Most revealing from their treatment is the dismissal that many male EMM fans promote; a concept that sexism or racism doesn't really exist, mainly because it's not something they themselves have experienced or had to confront. I've indulged in
numerous recounts, both in-person and online, in which fans have proclaimed, "None of my friends are racists," or, "I've been to plenty of shows and have never felt like I could be in danger," etc. This blindness towards racist and sexist affectations only furthers a prevailing ignorance existing in the scene.
CONCLUSION

When I began my research back in 2014, I hoped to find concrete answers to questions of how and why women participated in a historically ultra-masculine subgenre of metal. I was curious to learn if women in New York had different experiences than their UK, Canadian, and America South counterparts due to the concept of New York exceptionalism. What came to be revealed to me were overarching shared themes of exclusion, mistreatment, and areas of liminality.

As my work progressed, this ethnography evolved into a somewhat autoethnographic piece as I sought reflexivity with regard to my own experiences and challenges within New York’s EMM scene. I learned of, and echoed, many of the same experiences as my participants – my hesitations and observations mirrored those of many of the women who initially felt unwelcomed in the scene. Most notably, I learned of the challenges that women felt, not just from men, but from other women. During the course of my research, becoming an active voice for the marginalized within the exploration of New York’s EMM scene became important to me. Through this research, I hope to share the relevant experiences of my participants for future metal music study and analysis with regard to gender and race.

Influenced by Butler and McCleary’s frameworks, I’ve documented that the intersections of gender and race continue to be problematic areas of concern which can deter female participation in EMM when they diverge from the existent straight, white, male hegemony. In addition, this research has revealed areas of liminality for both female musicians and fans, specifically in areas of performativity and with the concept of vigilante feminism. Women are engaging in a dialogue with heavy metal, and by
extension EMM’s hyper-masculine discourse, through subversion and appropriation.

While metal’s historical trajectory has been to reify white hegemony, its audience continues to exhibit a growing diversity that leaves room for further analysis of marginalization, space, and agency. By approaching EMM through a lens of reconceptualization and embodiment, better insights can be gained about how women and other marginalized groups navigate their experiences when claiming areas of pre-defined masculine spaces (Riches 2015).

Although light has been shed on some of the myriad reasons why women take part in New York’s EMM scene through this thesis, many complicated questions remain. We are left to ponder the implications and self-reflections of a genre that holds its very existence on remaining underground and esoteric, enabling EMM’s reifying actions to exclude and make ‘other’ of marginalized groups to ensure its masculinity. How will women and women of color challenge this? In my final thoughts and answers to this, it is through the actions of musicians like Kayla Philips, Mallika Sundaramurthy, Jessica Pimental and scholars like Kristen Sollee, Laina Dawes, Gabrielle Riches, and Maureen Mahon who are not afraid to disrupt the patriarchy of the genre, enabling future women to identify and correlate both as fans and musicians. Riches says it best:

The unraveling of binary oppositions (masculinity/femininity; equality/difference; inclusion/exclusion) holds out the possibility for conceptualizing metal not as an oppressive space but as a complex discursive terrain. Because heavy metal is demarcated and made intelligible through the stylized repetition of corporeal acts and gestures, this inevitably opens up avenues for disruptive and subversive performativites; thus, creating real pathways for doing metal fandom differently. (Riches 2015:268)
WORKS CITED


BigThink. *Judith Butler: Your Behavior Creates Your Gender*, YouTube video, 03:00. June 6, 2011. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc)


[http://www.invisibleoranges.com/are-you-talking-to-me-respecting-women-in-metal/](http://www.invisibleoranges.com/are-you-talking-to-me-respecting-women-in-metal/)


http://cokemachineglow.com/features/interview-mindyabovitz/
APPENDICES
Appendix A – Consent form (For In Person Interview)

CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Hunter College
Graduate Department of Anthropology
695 Park Ave
NY, NY 10065
212.772.4000

CONSENT TO PARTICPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Project Title: Individual Thought Patterns: Women in NY’s Extreme Metal Music Scene

Principal Investigator: Joan Jocson-Singh
Graduate Student
Hunter College
695 Park Ave
NY, NY 10065

Faculty Advisor: Jonathan Shannon
Hunter College
695 Park Ave
NY, NY 10065
212.772.4000

Site where study is to be conducted: Online and in person

Introduction/Purpose: You are invited to participate in a research study. The number of subjects in this portion will be approximately 3-4 people. The study is conducted under the direction of Joan Jocson-Singh, a Graduate Student at Hunter College’s Anthropology Department. The purpose of this research study is to reveal how women in the NY tri-state area participate in the Extreme Metal Music (EMM) subculture, both subconsciously and consciously, while employing behaviors aligned with Third Wave Feminism. The study should also show a reflection of diversity in ethnicity and demographics that would be expected in NY’s tri-state area. The nature of the questions is about musical interest and demographics surrounding extreme metal music.

Procedures: Approximately 3-4 people are expected to participate via the “in person interview” portion of this study. Each subject will be given a set of questions. The time commitment of each participant is expected to be approximately 15-35 minutes. The nature of the questions will be about your interests and relationship with Extreme Metal Music (EMM).

Possible Discomforts and Risks: Your participation in this study will involve no more than minimal risk. However, interviews conducted in public areas will contain a minimal risk of
Confidentiality due to the minimal privacy afforded. If you have any concerns regarding this study you should contact the Principal Investigator for this study, Joan Jocson-Singh using the contact information provided above.

**Benefits:** There are no direct benefits from participating in this study.

**Alternatives:** An alternative to this interview is to not participate  

**Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decide not to participate without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to leave the study, please contact the Principal Investigator Joan Jocson-Singh to inform them of your decision.

**Financial Considerations:** Not applicable. Participation in this study will involve no cost and there will be no compensation provided.

**Confidentiality:** The data obtained from you will be collected via written documentation, recording, and via online web survey. The collected data will be accessible to the Principal Investigator; Joan Jocson-Singh, my faculty advisor Professor Jonathan Shannon and the IRB members and staff at Hunter College. The data will be kept for a minimum of 3 years. The researcher will protect your confidentiality by securely storing data, and ensuring that all documentation is taken in confidence. The collected data will be stored in a secure location at the graduate Anthropology department of Professor Jonathan Shannon, HN Room 713 in Hunter College.

**Contact Questions/Persons:** If you have any questions about the research now or in the future, you should contact the Principal Investigator, Joan Singh at Joan.Jocson-singh21@myhunter.cuny.edu or the Hunter College Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) office at 212-650-3053 or hrpp@hunter.cuny.edu, if you have questions regarding your rights as a subject for this study.

**Statement of Consent:**
“I have read the above description of this research and I understand it. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions that I may have will also be answered by the principal investigator of the research study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.”

By signing this form I have not waived any of my legal rights to which I would otherwise be entitled.

I will be given a copy of this statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Name of Subject</th>
<th>Signature of Subject</th>
<th>Date Signed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Name of Person Explaining Consent Form</th>
<th>Signature of Person Explaining Consent Form</th>
<th>Date Signed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Name of Investigator</th>
<th>Signature of Investigator</th>
<th>Date Signed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix B—Consent form (For Online Survey)

CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Hunter College
Graduate Department of Anthropology
695 Park Ave
NY, NY 10065
212.772.4000

CONSENT TO PARTICPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Project Title: Individual Thought Patterns: Women in NY’s Extreme Metal Music Scene

Principal Investigator: Joan Jocson-Singh
Graduate Student
Hunter College
695 Park Ave
NY, NY 10065

Faculty Advisor: Jonathan Shannon
Hunter College
695 Park Ave
NY, NY 10065
212.772.4000

Site where study is to be conducted: Online and in person

Introduction/Purpose: You are invited to participate in a research study. The online survey portion will consist of approximately 50-60 participants. The study is conducted under the direction of Joan Jocson-Singh, a Graduate Student at Hunter College’s Anthropology Department. The purpose of this research study is to reveal how women in the NY tri-state area participate in the Extreme Metal Music (EMM) subculture, both subconsciously and consciously, while employing behaviors aligned with Third Wave Feminism. The study should also show a reflection of diversity in ethnicity and demographics that would be expected in NY’s tri-state area. The nature of the questions is about musical interest and demographics surrounding extreme metal music.

Procedures: Approximately 50-60 people are expected to participate via the “online survey” portion of this study. Each subject will be given a set of questions. The time commitment of each participant is expected to be approximately 15 minutes. The nature of the questions will be about your interests and relationship with Extreme Metal Music (EMM).
Possible Discomforts and Risks: Your participation in this study will involve no more than minimal risk. However, interviews conducted in public areas will contain a minimal risk of confidentiality due to the minimal privacy afforded. If you have any concerns regarding this study you should contact the Principal Investigator for this study, Joan Jocson-Singh using the contact information provided above.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits from participating in this study.

Alternatives: An alternative to this interview is to not participate
Voluntary Participation: Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decide not to participate without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to leave the study, please contact the Principal Investigator Joan Jocson-Singh to inform them of your decision.

Financial Considerations: Not applicable. Participation in this study will involve no cost and there will be no compensation provided.

Confidentiality: The data obtained from you will be collected via written documentation and via online web survey. The collected data will be accessible to the Principal Investigator; Joan Jocson-Singh, my faculty advisor Professor Jonathan Shannon and the IRB members and staff at Hunter College. The data will be kept for a minimum of 3 years. The researcher will protect your confidentiality by securely storing data, and ensuring that all documentation is taken in confidence. The collected data will be stored in a secure location at the graduate Anthropology department of Professor Jonathan Shannon, HN Room 713 in Hunter College.

Contact Questions/Persons: If you have any questions about the research now or in the future, you should contact the Principal Investigator, Joan Singh at Joan.Jocson-singh21@myhunter.cuny.edu or the Hunter College Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) office at 212-650-3053 or hrpp@hunter.cuny.edu, if you have questions regarding your rights as a subject for this study.

Statement of Consent:

“I have read the above description of this research and I understand it. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions that I may have will also be answered by the principal investigator of the research study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.”
# Appendix C—Online Survey

## Questionnaire

### Women in NY’s Extreme Metal Music Scene

1. **Introduction**

   **Dear Participant,**

   Thank you for participating in this study. I am a graduate student conducting this survey as part of my thesis research in the Anthropology Department at Hunter College, City University of New York.

   Participants of this study must be female, age 16 and over, and involved in NY’s Extreme Metal Music Scene. Your involvement is voluntary and you can choose to end your participation at any point during the survey.

   Any identifying information you provide will be kept confidential. However, the study is not being run from a secure server and therefore a small possibility of responses may be viewable by unauthorized third parties, such as computer hackers. Every effort will be made to keep your responses confidential and secure.

   The results of this research may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used.

   The purpose of this study is to survey female participants (fans, musicians, and music industry workers) in the New York Tri-State area and address/answer the following overarching questions:

   1. What elements surface as common identity markers for women in New York’s Extreme metal scene?
   2. How does this compare to women in other regions (with regard to ethnicity, age, education, etc.)?
   3. In what ways do the behaviors and conventions of women in the NY extreme metal scene intersect with feminist/postmodern theory, 3rd Wave feminism, and feminist musicology?

   The results from this project may provide information on the unique experiences of women in the NY-Tri State area in relation to the Extreme Metal music scene.

   If you have any questions about this study, you can contact Joan Singh at Joan.Jocson-singh21@myhunter.cuny.edu or Hunter College’s Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) office at 212-650-3053 or hrpp@hunter.cuny.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a subject for this study:

   **Statement of Consent:**

   ‘I have read the above description of this research and I understand it. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions that I may have will also be answered by the principal investigator of the research study. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.’

   \[\text{in/}\]
2. Who are you?

Here, we'll collect some information about who you are. Once this is done, we'll move onto the music-related questions.

1. Who are you? (optional)
   - First Name
   - Last Name

2. What is your gender?
   - Female
   - Male
   - Other

3. What is your age?
   - 18 to 24
   - 25 to 34
   - 35 to 44
   - 45 to 54
   - 55 to 64
   - 65 to 74

4. What is your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply.)
   - American Indian or Alaskan Native
   - Asian or Pacific Islander
   - Black or African American
   - Hispanic or Latino
   - White / Caucasian
   - Prefer not to answer

5. Where in the NY/Tri-State area are you from?
   (Please include both city & state, example: Yonkers, NY)
   - City
   - State
6. Which of the following best describes your current occupation? (If you have more than one job, select the one you consider primary.)

- Business and Financial Operations Occupations
- Computer and Mathematical Occupations
- Architecture and Engineering Occupations
- Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations
- Community and Social Service Occupations
- Legal Occupations
- Education, Training, and Library Occupations
- Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations
- Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations
- Healthcare Support Occupations
- Protective Service Occupations
- Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations
- Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations
- Personal Care and Service Occupations
- Sales and Related Occupations
- Office and Administrative Support Occupations
- Construction and Extraction Occupations
- Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations
- Production Occupations
- Transportation and Materials Moving Occupations

Other (please specify):
Women in NY’s Extreme Metal Music Scene

7. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- Less than high school degree
- High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- Some college but no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor degree
- Graduate degree

Other (please specify):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Do you play any instruments?</strong></td>
<td>Yes, No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. If you play any instruments (or sing), what are they?</strong></td>
<td>Bass, Drums, Guitar, Keyboard, Singing, Other instrument(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. If you sing, what singing/vocal style(s) do you employ?</strong></td>
<td>Clean singing, Growling, Shrilling, Other (please specify)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11. Have you studied music, either formally or on your own?</strong></td>
<td>Yes, formally, Yes, independently, No, Explain (optional)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Women in NY's Extreme Metal Music Scene

12. What are your favorite bands/albums/songs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Bands</th>
<th>Albums</th>
<th>Songs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Women in NY’s Extreme Metal Music Scene

4. Thoughts on Metal

Here, we’ll ask a few questions about what got you into Extreme Metal and your thoughts on demographics.

13. What genres do you consider to be part of Extreme Metal music?
   - [ ] Black
   - [ ] Death
   - [ ] Deathcore
   - [ ] Gengi
   - [ ] Doom
   - [ ] Grind
   - [ ] Sludge
   - [ ] Thrash
   
   Other (please specify):

14. What drew you to Extreme Metal music?

15. What do you think draws other women to Extreme Metal music?

16. Women represent a small but growing number of the Extreme Metal fan base. What do you think differentiates them from women who do not listen to Extreme Metal?

17. What is your understanding of feminism and do you feel it has a place in Extreme Metal?
Women in NY's Extreme Metal Music Scene

18. Are there any female musicians that have influenced you or left a strong impression on you? If so, whom and why?

19. Do you identify with any of the following religions? (Please select all that apply.)

- Buddhism
- Catholicism
- Christianity
- Islam
- Judaism
- Hinduism
- Native American
- Norse/Asatru
- Protestantism
- Satanism (Atheistic)
- Satanism (Theistic)
- Wiccan
- Inter/Non-denominational
- No religion
- Other religion

Does your religion (or lack of religion) affect your experience or appreciation of extreme metal?
### 5. Experiences in the scene

What are some of the observations that you’ve made or opinions you’ve formed from being in the scene and going to shows?

20. Do you feel that NY’s Extreme Metal scene is welcoming for women?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

What has been your experience?

21. Do you feel NY’s Extreme Metal scene is ethnically diverse?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

What has been your experience?

22. Have you been to Extreme Metal shows outside the NY-Tri State area?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

If so, did you find the “scene” different than what you would experience in NY?

23. How do you think women are represented in the Extreme Metal scene overall?
Women in NY's Extreme Metal Music Scene<br>

24. Do female fans approach or perceive you differently from male fans?
   - Yes
   - No
   Explain (optional):

25. Do you approach or perceive female fans differently from male fans?
   - Yes
   - No
   Explain (optional):

26. Have you ever been in a situation within the "scene" in which you felt unsafe?
   - Yes
   - No
   Explain what happened.
6. Wrap-Up

We're at the end!

Thanks for taking the time to participate in this survey. If you know other female extreme metallers who would like to participate, please share the survey link with them.

Here are some final questions.

27. Do you follow any types of media regularly to get your music news? (Blogs, magazines, tv shows, radio, etc.? Explain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blogs/Websites</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magazines/Fanzines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV Shows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Shows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Radio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28. Final comments or questions - is there anything else you'd like us to know?

29. If you have any questions regarding this survey, please email: Joan.Jocson-singh21@myhunter.cuny.edu
or you can leave your email below and I will contact you.

Thank you.
Appendix D—Flyers for recruitment

Business Card and Flyer Image

Wordpress Posting
Facebook Posting

As part of my thesis research on Women and Extreme Metal Music, I feel included a survey to help inform part of this study. 

Individual Thought Patterns: Women in NY's Extreme Metal Scene

The purpose of this study is to survey female participants ( musicians, and music industry workers) in the New York Tri-State area and address some of the following questions:

1. What elements surface as common identity markers for women in New York's extreme metal scenes?
2. How do these community differences (in terms of age, education, etc.) in play?
3. What are the social and political identities of women in the NY extreme metal scene in terms of the NY extreme metal scene taken as a whole?
4. How do these identities shape the music scene and the city's culture?

The results of this study may provide information on the unique experiences of women in the NY-Tri-State area in relation to the extreme metal music scene.

If you have any questions about the study, you can contact Joan Singh at Joan.Singh@nyu.edu or Amber C. H. at Amber.C.H@nyu.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a subject for this study, please contact the Office for Human Research Protections at 212-998-3456 or hrpo@nyu.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a subject for this study, please contact the Office for Human Research Protections at 212-998-3456 or hrpo@nyu.edu.

And please pass it along to any women (or you feel might not have some insight on the NY's Extreme Metal Scene.
Appendix E—Email Script

Dear Potential Subject,

My name is Joan Jocson-Singh and I am a graduate student conducting this interview as part of thesis research in the Anthropology department at Hunter College, City University of New York. Thank you for your interest.

Before you can participate, it is important that you know that to be part of this study you must be age 18 and over. Your involvement is voluntary and you can choose to withdraw your participation at any point during the interview. Any identifying information you provide will be kept confidential. Every effort will be made to keep your responses confidential and secure. The results of this research may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used.

The purpose of this research study is to reveal how women in the NY tri-state area participate in the Extreme Metal Music (EMM) subculture, both subconsciously and consciously, while employing behaviors aligned with Third Wave Feminism. The study should also show a reflection of diversity in ethnicity and demographics that would be expected in NY’s tri-state area.

I will be surveying female participants (fans, musicians, and music industry workers) in the New York Tri-state area and address/answer the following overarching questions:

(1) What elements surface as common identity markers for women in New York’s Extreme metal scene?
(2) How does this compare to women in other regions (with regard to ethnicity, age, education, etc.)
(3) In what ways do the behaviors and conventions of women in the NY extreme metal scene intersect with feminist/post-modern theory, 3rd Wave feminism, and feminist musicology?

The results from this project may provide information on the unique experiences of women in the NY-Tri State area in relation to the Extreme Metal music scene.

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact Joan Singh at Joan.Jocson-singh21@myhunter.cuny.edu or the Hunter College Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) office at 212-650-3053 or hrpp@hunter.cuny.edu, if you have questions regarding your rights as a subject for this study.
Appendix F—Phone script/ Interview script (in-person)

**Researcher Introduction:**
Hello my name is Joan Jocson-Singh and I’m a graduate student in the Anthropology Department at Hunter College, NY. Thank you for agreeing to meet with me to talk a little more on your experience as a woman in the NY EMM scene.
First off, please feel free to interrupt me at any point in the course of this interview if you have any questions regarding the process.
Thanks!

**Questions:**

1. How old are?
2. When did you start listening to Extreme Metal Music (EMM)?
3. What types of music do you consider to be EMM?
4. What drew you into EMM?
5. What is your understanding of feminism and do you feel it has a place in the NY’s EMM scene?
6. Do you identify yourself as a feminist?
7. Are you a musician?
   a. If so, what do you play/sing?
   b. What type of music do you play?
   c. Do you employ any feminist themes in your music writing/playing?
   d. Are you in a mixed gendered band?
   e. As a woman, how do you feel you are received when you play at shows?
   f. Do you feel that you are treated differently within the band?
   g. How do you feel about other female musicians?
8. Do you feel that NY’s EMM scene is welcoming to women?
9. Do interact with other women in the EMM scene?
10. How do you view other women in the EMM scene?
11. What role do you think gender plays in the EMM scene?
12. What are some of your favorite bands?
13. What other types of music do you listen to?
14. In what other ways do you participate in the EMM scene (other than attending shows?)
Appendix G—Bands referenced in survey by participants*


* Number in parenthesis denotes number of times band was referenced by participants