

CHAPTER SEVEN

LOVE BREED OR HATE HAVEN? LOCALIZED NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY IN HEAVY METAL SCENE OF NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

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Introduction

Studies on localized narratives of identity have a longstanding place in metal music studies. Scholars such as McGrath¹, Gerk², Patterson³, and Varas-Díaz et al.⁴ have all produced recent pertinent studies on certain local metal scenes, ranging from Botswana, various geographic areas of the United States, to Puerto Rico.

¹ Bill McGrath, "The Othering of Botswanan Metal," in *Modern Heavy Metal: Markets, Practices and Cultures*, eds. Toni-Matti Karjalainen and Kimi Kärki (Helsinki: Aalto University, 2015), 206-218.

² Sarah Gerk, "Placing gender: Alice Cooper's motor city move," in *Heavy Metal, Gender, and Sexuality: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Florian Heesch and Niall Scott (Milton Park: Routledge, 2016), 84-95.

³ Jamie E. Patterson, "Blasting Britney on the Way to Goatwhore: Identity and Authenticity among Female-identified Fans in Semi-rural North Carolina," in eds. Gabby Riches, Brenda G. Walter, Dave Snell and Bryan Bardine, *Heavy Metal Studies and Popular Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 123-144.

⁴ Nelson Varas-Díaz, Sigrid Mendoza, Eliut Rivera and Osvaldo González-Sepúlveda, "Metal at the Fringe: A Historical Perspective on Puerto Rico's Underground Metal Scene," eds. Gabby Riches, Brenda G. Walter, Dave Snell and Bryan Bardine, *Heavy Metal Studies and Popular Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 99-122.

Through numerous ethnographic interviews⁵ with individuals in the heavy metal music scene in New Haven, Connecticut (USA), and the former mayor of New Haven, John DeStefano, who outlined the majority of the “sanctuary city” policies, this chapter will determine some localized narrative of the heavy metal scene within New Haven. Interviews with those formerly and currently in New Haven metal/hardcore bands also provided insight into local identities in New Haven.

Conclusions of this study have indicated that many New Haven residents have an identity of shared civil rights, as opposed to shared cultural roots. This study also focused on gender, based on the responses from several of my first participants. There also was a strong political undertone to this study, participants also mentioned how United States President Donald Trump does not share the values that they, as residents of New Haven, and participants in the metal music scene, value. The political climate of the United States could arguably be a reason why the participants were so adamant, and forthcoming, on this subject.

This study has also indicated that, arguably, men believe the metal scene is inclusive, whereas women point out the inequalities. This study could also indicate that New Haven, Connecticut, has similar problems that arise in other metal scenes (particularly when it comes to race and gender), but it takes members of groups that are marginalized to point these problems out: indicating that those in groups that are privileged could, debatably, be oblivious to their privilege.

Setting the Scene: Metal Music in New Haven

New Haven is home to several live music venues that book metal bands. Of the participants interviewed, the most popular venues listed included Toad’s Place (opened in 1976), College Street Music Hall (opened in 2015), and Three Sheets (opened 2014). Bands that tour nationally often play in Toad’s Place and College Street Music Hall, whereas local bands usually play Three Sheets. Toad’s Place is the oldest venue. Former New Haven Mayor John DeStefano remembers many shows at Toad’s Place in his youth. When describing Toad’s Place, DeStefano remembers “Tight music, beer, and lots of smoke (about which I have no more to say)!”⁶. As

⁵ All participants of the interviews, contacted during 2016, are treated anonymously without specified references in this chapter, with the exception of former Mayor John DeStefano.

⁶ John DeStefano, interview by Amanda DiGioia, February 10, 2016.

someone who has attended Toad's Place more recently, I can safely argue that not much has changed.

One of my participants that plays in a metal band in New Haven noted the importance of Manic Productions, a booking agency, regarding metal shows in New Haven. According to them, Manic Productions often books the best metal bands to play at College Street Music Hall (having previously worked with Toad's Place). Several individuals also indicated that College Street Music Hall is the best place in New Haven to see a metal band that tours nationally, and deemed Toad's Place as being "second tier".

Of all the bands that have risen from the New Haven metal music scene, arguably, the most popular is Hatebreed. When I asked participants how they would respond if someone insisted that Hatebreed was from Norwalk, Connecticut, one participant claimed that "Those dorks don't know Connecticut metal or hardcore", and pointed out that even the band's Wikipedia article states they originated from New Haven. Other bands that originate from New Haven are Guard, Unloved, Cast in Blood, Kings and Liars, and Demon Chauffer. While Guard is more hardcore, Unloved, Kings and Liars and Demon Chauffer are both not members of the metalcore genre (unlike Hatebreed). Kings and Liars list riffs, solos, choruses, melody, and harmony among their interests, whereas Demon Chauffer markets themselves as providers of all that is obscure, absurd, and obscene.

When I asked a participant ("M") of my study who plays in a metal band currently, to describe the New Haven metal scene, he replied:

CT metal and hardcore is angrier and kids don't give a fuck about what other people think. They do their own thing, they play harder than other bands, they tour more. The scene is welcoming and full of bullshit at the same time. Fans and bands tend to be really socially liberal, but New Haven has higher musical standards and less places to play. The community is under more scrutiny from those involved in it. New Haven is jaded, and angry. They aren't a big city, like Boston or New York, but are stuck in between both of them. So everything that comes out of New Haven has to be that much better to get out of there.

An Elm City Primer

As one of my participants mentioned, New Haven's metal music audience is socially liberal, and that perhaps is a reflection on the socially liberal policies implemented and enforced in New Haven. New Haven,

Connecticut (nicknamed “The Elm City”)⁷, is one of the largest cities found in Connecticut, which is a state within the North-Eastern corridor of the United States of America. New Haven is famous for Yale University, but has much more than that. Popular culture has many consumers under the impression that Connecticut, USA, is affluent and lacking in diversity.

As a “sanctuary city” that contains wildly different demographics, New Haven stands in stark contrast to this popular cultural belief. The term ‘sanctuary city’ references a city that permits residence to undocumented immigrants in an effort to help them avoid deportation⁸. In response to President Trump’s promises to crackdown on illegal immigration and cut funding to sanctuary cities, Mayor Toni Harp of New Haven has stated:

I believe it’s unconstitutional. We will fight it. If you want to make your dream come true, if you want to be a contributing member of our community, you are welcome here.⁹

New Haven officials view on immigration often aligns with the values of the Democratic Party of the United States of America, who have adopted the constructed mythology of the United States being repository of the world’s dreams, with the duty to fulfil as many of them as it can through immigration, while the President of the United States, Donald Trump, and his supporters view the United States as a nation state, not an agency tasked with fulfilling the dreams of other citizens of the world¹⁰. While data indicates that New Haven is possibly relatively welcoming to those who reside in the city, as opposed to being solely inclusive those who were born there or in the United States, the city expresses what Thomas Hylland Eriksen calls “a polyethnic or supra-ethnic ideology

⁷ Thomas Macmillan, “They’re Putting The “Elm” Back In “Elm City,” *The New Haven Independent*, May 27, 2009,

http://newhavenindependent.org/archives/2009/05/elm_city_to_ree.php.

⁸ Mary O’Leary, “Immigration talk in New Haven focuses on sanctuary cities,” *New Haven Register*, March 28, 2017.

<http://www.nhregister.com/connecticut/article/Immigration-talk-in-New-Haven-focuses-on-11310508.php>.

⁹ Noelle Gardner, “New Haven mayor vows to protect sanctuary city,”

<http://wtnh.com/2017/01/26/new-haven-mayor-vows-to-protect-sanctuary-city/>, accessed March 1, 2017.

¹⁰ Christopher Caldwell, “Immigration stirs up passions of national identity,”

<https://www.ft.com/content/ed3f2f3a-e636-11e6-893c-082c54a7f539>, accessed March 1, 2017.

which stresses shared civil rights rather than shared cultural roots, *jus soli* rather than *jus sanguinis*”¹¹.

Former New Haven Mayor (serving from 1994-2014), John DeStefano, Jr., who implemented many of the ‘sanctuary city’ policies, including the Elm City ID Card (a way for undocumented immigrants to gain access to city services and to open bank accounts)¹², stated:

New Haven was recently cited as a City most demographically consistent with the country's demography. In other words we look like America. The City is very diverse economically, racially and by education attainment. In many respects this results from the fact that it is very welcoming to both documented and undocumented immigrants; and, because it is a university community (we have four). In this respect I think the City is very representative of the Nation's traditional values as an open and welcoming place¹³.

Other participants in my survey echoed DeStefano’s statements. “K.C.” said that:

A study recently showed that New Haven is the region most reflective of the cultural and demographic makeup of the whole country: America isn’t solely white. Any trend of white nationalism is not taking root here.

Those who are in the LGBTQ¹⁴ scene in New Haven can also potentially feel welcome in New Haven. “D”, a participant who is a male member of the New Haven LGBTQ community told me:

I believe New Haven absolutely supports and, dare I say, exemplifies the “true values” of the United States. Most people who know CT solely from how it’s portrayed in films and television would probably be surprised to discover that it’s a sanctuary city that’s home to every culture, religion, race, etc., that you could imagine. The white bread, upper class CT that’s often portrayed is literally small portions of only a couple counties. I came to New Haven for school when I was 18, and here I am 15 years later still

¹¹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "Nationalism," In *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), 117-146.

¹² Mary O’Leary, "Residents can apply July 24 for Elm City ID." *The New Haven Register*. September 28, 2017, http://www.nhregister.com/site/index.cfm?newsid=18552336&BRD=1281&PAG=461&dept_id=517515&rfti=8.

¹³ DeStefano, interview.

¹⁴ LGBTQ or LGBTQ* stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer: * indicates any other identity under the Queer spectrum.

calling it my home. During this past election, I constantly heard that I live in a “coastal elite bubble.” I think that’s completely short sighted to say. I live in a city where people of all different nationalities, sexualities, economic standings, and religious beliefs are my neighbours, friends, and co-workers. How is that a bubble? The demographics that voted for that THING sitting in the White House (Trump) right now seem to have forgotten that their parents, or grandparents, or great grandparents were immigrants. That is the United States. I’m grateful to live in a city where I can date someone of the same sex and a different ethnicity, and have almost no one give it a second glance. I live in the “melting pot” that we’re always taught about in elementary school.

While DeStefano, and others, said that New Haven was welcoming, some residents thought otherwise, although the ire was directed more at city services and Yale students, and not residents themselves. This stands in contrast to DeStefano, who claimed that the university community being an asset. “G” who was originally from Ohio, and had moved to New Haven for work, claimed that:

The student community, in particular Yale, are, at least the ones that I had contact with, awful people. I have had nothing but problems with the city, car getting towed for unjust reasons, taxes, police, theft, shady housing/landlords I can go on. The city has always felt like they are trying to scam me at every turn. Does this reflect the US as a nation? That is a very subject, you can argue that either way. I like to think that the US is there to take care of me and its people, but I'm sure I could make an argument that they are not and just in it to make money like a business. The metal scene is 100% different than all this. It is a lot more of an inviting place for everyone. Universal language so to speak. Everyone is the same in a mosh pit.

While these gripes about New Haven may indeed be valid, regarding the equality of individuals in metal music scenes, other scholars of metal music studies, like Laina Dawes, have indicated in their work, not everyone is the same in the moshpit, and issues of race and gender are still omnipresent in the metal music subculture¹⁵. This will be expanded upon later in this chapter. Another participant, “T”, had a negative outlook on the city, saying:

New Haven is somewhat of a diverse city but it is divided between the Rich White (YALE) and the middle to poor class (The rest of us). New

¹⁵ Laina Dawes, *What Are You Doing Here?* (Brooklyn : Bazillion Points, 2013).

Haven is also slowly becoming more accommodating to the rich and from what I've seen ignoring the voices of the tired and poor.

As a researcher who was born in New Haven, received two degrees from a University there, and lived there, I was wondering if the metal music scene was equally as welcoming, particularly regarding people of colour, and women. Therefore, I decided to do ethnography (which included some auto-ethnographic aspects) in order to get a better understanding of my hometown.

Ethnography in Metal Music Studies

As mentioned in the introduction, many metal music scholars use ethnographic methods when undergoing their research, Jasmine Hazel Shadrack being one of the most prominent recent examples¹⁶. Jack Katz, a professor of sociology at UCLA, provides a critique of fieldwork practices.¹⁷ Katz states that all ethnographies are politically cast and policy relevant, with each of the three recurrent political rhetorics being related to a unique set of fieldwork practices. I have come to use Katz's theory on ethnography, due to the fact that I myself am a "bourgeois professional" ethnographer, which will be explained later in this chapter.

Katz argues that the first genre of ethnographies present a picture of social life that is juxtaposed to common stereotypes. Katz calls this genre the "worker" ethnography. To develop a politically powerful juxtaposition, the ethnographer is in the field operating as a novice jack-of-all-trades, while detailing the varied regions of the field subjects' lives through a relatively unspecialized description. By scaling back his or her authorial posture, the ethnographer sustains a respect for the field subjects, who are rendered as fully human beings: even through self-reflexive passages, the subjects remain at the centre stage of the text.

The second genre that Katz describes is the "aristocratic" ethnographer. This researcher does not spend much time with subjects, and does not describe everyday events, while additionally failing to present in the text empirical materials showing disparities in the lives of subjects that are directly applicable to the theory offered. Katz acknowledges that this kind of ethnography can make a significant contribution in certain points in the

¹⁶ Jasmine Hazel Shadrack, J. "Get Over It: women extreme metal performers and the hegemonic response", "Extreme Music: Hearing and Nothingness" Conference, Odense, Denmark, December 2016.

¹⁷ Jack Katz, "On the Rhetoric and Politics of Ethnographic Methodology," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 595, no. 1 (2004), 280-308.

history of research on given types of social phenomena, but also provides a flat, unvaried, superficial picture of the subjects in order to cast them into illustrations of theory.

The third, and least formally political, of the ethnography categories created by Katz is deemed the “bourgeois professional”. In this case, the ethnographer works as a specialist studying a kind of social process, construction and analysing series of cases that show minute deviations between analogous events, biographies, and types of social action. Expertise is needed to make sense of what will often be invisible to lay viewers without professional instruction, the analogy given by Katz describes the ethnographer as a dentist looking at x-rays of teeth, making sense of phenomena that appears to be analogous to the outside viewer. Research projects in this genre are distinguished by the creation of sets of closely related data. I myself am this kind of ethnographer; in lieu of being a dentist, comparing teeth x-rays, I compare minute differences in metal music scenes that are invisible to outside viewers.

In my study, I am akin to the “bourgeois professional”: I am a specialist in metal music, studying the social process of the New Haven metal music scene (the town of my birth), while analysing a series of cases that show minute deviations between how localized identity is perceived and constructed in New Haven, as opposed to scenes in the world. This book chapter will contain an autoethnographic element within the conclusion as well. Autoethnography is an approach to writing that analyses personal experience in order to understand cultural experience; as a method, it is both a process and product¹⁸.

Bourdieu and Social Capital

Many ethnographers in metal music studies use the theories of Bourdieu in their academic work: examples include Smialek¹⁹ and Miller²⁰ whose work is expanded on later in this chapter. Bourdieu describes social capital as being: “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an

¹⁸ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Arthur, “Autoethnography: An Overview,” *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 36, No. 4 (2011), 273-290.

¹⁹ Eric Smialek, “The Unforgiven: A Reception Study of Metallica Fans and 'Sell-Out' Accusations,” in *Global Metal Music Studies and Culture*, eds. Andy R. Brown, Karl Spracklen, Keith Kahn-Harris and Niall W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 2016), 106-124.

²⁰ Diana L. Miller, “Symbolic Capital and Gender: Evidence from Two Cultural Fields,” *Cultural Sociology* 8, no. 4 (2014), 462-482.

individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”²¹. Arguably, social capital is a theory that is prevalent in analysis of metal scenes in metal music studies, and has been utilized by other scholars, such as Allett²² and therefore is an imperative aspect of my work.

There are two overlapping concepts: symbolic capital and social capital. Symbolic and social capital are similar, but have marked differences: social capital refers to means available to an individual based on prestige, as opposed to social capital, which Bourdieu describes as being: “the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition”²³. Bourdieu’s concepts of symbolic capital and social capital have influenced many sociologists, and has been applied to ethnographic analysis. Bourdieu explains that symbolic capital as a coveted resource, as it allows individuals the ability to “consecrate” people, places, and objects as aesthetically legitimate, thereby permitting those that have it to be legitimized, making their views and appearances more valid²⁴.

Diana Miller explored heavy metal scenes and their use of a gendered understanding of Bourdieu’s concept symbolic capital in her article “Symbolic Capital and Gender: Evidence from Two Cultural Fields”²⁵. Bourdieu’s idea of symbolic capital centres on an individual’s reputation, honour, or prestige within a social space, which can then be transformed into a resource, facilitating work opportunities or media coverage²⁶. Miller studied the metal music scene in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. She attests that Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital has never benefited from a gendered analysis, and that his theories on gender in symbolic capital are underdeveloped. Miller argues that reputation, honour, or prestige are based on individual’s evaluating each other, and that gender is an integral part of that equation, as “We do not evaluate each other as abstract, genderless beings, but as men and women”²⁷.

²¹ Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Waquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

²² Nicola F. Allett, *Love’s Labours’: Extreme Metal Music and its Feeling Community* (Warwick: University of Warwick, 2010).

²³ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 119.

²⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1993).

²⁵ Miller, Symbolic Capital and Gender”.

²⁶ Miller, 462.

²⁷ Miller, 462.

The least-institutionalized form of symbolical capital Miller found within the heavy metal music scene in Toronto is “buzz,” or word of mouth. Buzz reflects the opinion of individual subjects in the field, usually a fan, with no organizational affiliation²⁸. Buzz can spread through literal word-of-mouth, as people attend events and social gatherings and hear which artists their friends or family are talking about. Buzz can also spread online, as members of the heavy metal music subculture share audio and video recordings through social media. Miller describes buzz as being critically important to the metal scene, as many metal fans described local bands having become popular through word-of-mouth. Buzz also has ties to gender, and therefore, gendered social capital. The lack of institutionalized symbolic capital in the metal field disadvantages woman, as buzz is subjective and unquantifiable, and without explicit evaluative criteria people often draw on familiar, unexamined standards like gender stereotypes²⁹.

When interviewing a male and female band member who played in New Haven, I paid special attention to how word got out about their show, and if they felt as if gendered expectations were coming into play at any point during their time playing in New Haven, Connecticut.

Participants

I made every effort to have a diverse set of participants in my miniature ethnography of the metal music scene of New Haven. One participant is the aforementioned former mayor, John DeStefano, Jr. I was able to interview many participants through my connections in the metal music scene of New Haven, being a long-time resident. I posted statuses on my personal Facebook asking those who are interested in speaking to me to reach out. I then either called, FaceTimed, or reached out to participants via email.

My participant pool included men of colour, women of colour, individuals in the LGBTQ community, white men and women, along with a woman and a couple of men who are either currently playing or have played in either hardcore or metal bands in New Haven. The age of participants ranged from 24-65. This study is limited to individuals who are participating in the heavy metal music scene within the geographic location of New Haven. The confines of my research are geographic: I am currently obtaining my PhD at University College London. Although I

²⁸ Miller, 475.

²⁹ Miller, 477.

have a history of being involved in metal music in New Haven (and am a second generation metalhead, as my parents were involved in the New Haven metal music scene long before I came along), I could not physically go to shows or interview individuals in person from September 2016 onwards. Therefore, I conducted these interviews via text, Skype, or phone.

I asked several questions in the interviews, many of which were based on National Identity, which was the theme of the Modern Heavy Metal 2017 Conference. For example: What are some traits that New Haven as a city identifies with? How does these traits align with the views the United States as a whole? Does the metal scene in New Haven reflect New Haven's traits and ideals?

Metal Tastes in New Haven

My respondents listened to various genres of metal music in New Haven. This shows that the metal music scene in New Haven is not based around a singular genre of metal, as opposed to other scenes, such as Gothenburg Melodic Death Metal or Bay Area Thrash³⁰, “where a certain sound became inextricably linked to the music produced at a certain time and place”³¹. Bands playing a variety of subgenres can find an audience in New Haven, at one of the many live local music venues: Toad's Place, Café Nine, Stella Blues, Three Sheets, and the College Street Music Hall. This provides New Haven residents with ample opportunities to see live music throughout the week.

My respondents had some interesting comments regarding metal genres they listened to. Notably, respondent “L” claimed that heavy metal and symphonic/folk metal were separate entities, stating: “I don't listen to heavy metal actively. I'm more into symphonic/folk metal. Nightwish and Eluveitie are some of my favourites. I've met some people who know of Nightwish for sure”. Many metal music scholars would argue that Nightwish is, in fact, both a heavy metal band and a symphonic metal band. Another interesting, and admittedly, humorous response by “K.C” sounded: “Does Metallica count anymore? Someone just got me into Ghost. I've softened in my old age.”

³⁰ Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007).

³¹ Bill McGrath, “The Othering of Botswanan Metal,” in *Modern Heavy Metal: Markets, Practices and Cultures*, eds. Toni-Matti Karjalainen and Kimi Kärki (Helsinki: Aalto University, 2015), 206-218.

Location, Race, and Gender in New Haven Metal Scene

My participants had varied responses when I asked them to describe the metal scene in New Haven, Connecticut was like. In these conversations, three main themes of location, race, and gender were generally raised. In terms of location, some mentioned the geographic benefits of the city, particularly regarding when bands go on tour, (this could perhaps be because they played in hardcore or metal bands in Connecticut themselves). “M” stated:

New Haven's metal scene has helped pave the foundation for national touring bands from the east coast. From bands that started in New Haven like Hatebreed, to the venues that became frequent tour stops for most bands on national tours such were Toad's Place, The Tune Inn, and American legion halls. These smaller stops served as collective meeting spots for underground music between Boston and NY. The identity of CT was reflected mostly of the generation that went to shows in New Haven.

Many respondents noted the diversity in the New Haven metal scene, ranging from gender, to ethnicity, to class. “K.C” explains:

The "metal scene" gets a rep for being one thing or another. The metal scene is actually all things. It brings together all kinds of people from backgrounds, cultures, races, classes, & tax brackets. I studied jazz sax & now I'm a lawyer. I see teachers, politicians, doctors, baristas, personal trainers, bartenders, etc., at these shows and wearing their black tee shirts. It's the most representative fan base we have.

As one responded stated mentioned earlier (“Everyone is the same in a mosh pit”), other white, male participants in the New Haven metal music scene sang the praises of how diverse and inclusive the scene is, with both bands and participants being welcoming and wanting everyone to do well. Another respondent, “F”, mentioned how metal lead them to making friends in New Haven, after recently moving there from the United Kingdom:

Until I moved to NHV from Leeds, United Kingdom, I had never met another Baroness fan at all. Not even anyone who had ever heard of them. I met one here, several years ago & he is one of the best people I have ever met. I have that from New Haven & Metal... pretty great!

“P.C”, who is also a vocalist in a local New Haven metal band, said:

I like to think New Haven has a lot of acceptance. It has a great deal of potential for great ideas that take a lot of courage and love, and plenty of passionate people to get things done. I'd like to think that no matter what adversity we're facing as a nation, that the majority of this country had those same traits and ideals as I've seen in New Haven. The metal scene is no different, in fact it's a great example of how we should include and accept everyone. The metal scene, in the past and present, has been quite known for harbouring a colourful group of societal outcasts who dress and express themselves differently than what is accepted as the norm. We know what it's like to be singled out, and thusly the metal scene treats everyone equally and is one of the most all-inclusive groups I subscribe myself to.

However, when interviewing women and people of colour who participate in the New Haven metal music scene, they painted a somewhat different picture. While many said that overall, the community was welcoming, there were other unsavoury elements that need to be called out and addressed. There is a dichotomy in the metal scene in New Haven: the scene is described as being welcoming and communal, while simultaneously being discriminatory and hostile. This mirrors many other studies done on metal music scenes³². One participant, "P", who is a man of colour, said:

I've never felt discriminated against at a metal show in New Haven. New Haven's music scene is totally diverse and made up of multiple cultures. There's always that one racist or sexist band, that can spoil it for everyone, but I've never come across one. Same with fans...the scene has never been racist or sexist to me as a whole. There's always one closet Nazi, but they always get put in check. The scene in New Haven policies itself.

While this participant says that he has never felt discriminated against at metal show in New Haven himself, he acknowledges that there's always "one racist", or one "sexist band", or a "closet Nazi", but says that they are always "put in check", while espousing that the scene in New Haven policies itself. When I interviewed one participant who is a woman of colour, and another participant who is a white woman, they both

³² Amber R. Clifford-Napoleone, "Metal, Masculinity and the queer subject," in *Heavy Metal, Gender and Sexuality: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, eds. Florian Heesch and Niall Scott (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 39-50; Lyndsay Helfrich, 'I Wanna Rock: A Critique of Gender Essentialism in Metal Music Scholarship,' Master of Arts Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada, 2017; Rosemary Overell, R, "[I] hate girls and emo[tion]s: Neogitating masculinity in gind-core music," in *Heavy metal: Controversies and countercultures*, eds. Keith Kahn-Harris and Titus Hjelm (Bristol: Equinox, 2013), 201-227.

acknowledged that some negative things could occur in the metal music scene in New Haven. “L” who is a woman of colour said:

You can find both sides of the coin pretty much anywhere. The metal scene has always been really welcoming towards me... but I'm also not an asshole, so that may be a factor.

Here, the participant recognized decency and bigotry as two sides of a coin that permeates the overarching society of the United States of America. The white woman participant “T” had a much more succinct summarization:

I think the metal scene is diverse as far as music but there definitely is a whole bunch of white people in the scene and not too many people of colour.

Much like Diana Miller’s study regarding gender indicates, my participants comments regarding “two sides of the coin”, “closet Nazis”, and “a whole bunch of white people”, coupled with occasional altercations that need “policing”, could indicate that people of colour and women have lower social capital in metal scenes, as opposed to white men. Interestingly, it takes those who are members of marginalized communities to point this out. The white men, who have both male and white privilege, which I interviewed, made no such indication of these problems. White privilege references how white people enjoy societal advantages that non-white people do not experience³³, which can be seen in professional, educational, and personal circumstances. Male privilege describes the special privileges and status that males are granted in patriarchal societies: the United States of America is a patriarchal society³⁴, and New Haven, being a city in the United States is no exception. Those who are privileged may not be able to see oppression, as their privilege blinds them to it. Straight, or heterosexual privilege, much like white privilege and male privilege, references unearned or unchallenged advantages given to heterosexual members of society, solely because of their sexual orientation³⁵.

³³ Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” *Independent School* 31 (1989).

³⁴ Thomas Keith, *Masculinities in Contemporary American Culture: An Intersectional Approach* (Abington: Routledge, 2017).

³⁵ Zachary Zane, “Bisexuals, Passing, and Straight Privilege: A Deeper Look.”, *Huffington Post*, March 6, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zachary-zane/bisexuals-passing-and-straight-privilege_b_9374272.html, accessed September 26, 2017.

Regarding the LGBTQ community, one of my participants who is a member of the community mentioned that he has always felt welcomed at any kind of venue in New Haven. The participant also mentioned that many gay bars in New Haven are places where all individuals who participate in alternative cultures (like metal culture, or goth culture), are welcomed, although that welcoming presence is not always reciprocated. This could indicate that those who attend queer or gay bars, and who are welcomed by the LGBTQ community under the banner of being alternative, could also simultaneously show straight or heterosexual privilege. “D” said:

Gay clubs (in New Haven) have always been a place where ALL alternative lifestyles are welcome. We can all relate to what it’s like to be the outsider. Allies have always been welcomed in, but the thing I’ve noticed lately in the New Haven bars is that the community is growing less and less patient with people that come in who don’t fully respect or understand the culture. For example, a group of girls on a bachelorette party that come in for a drag show and act like it’s a big joke, not understanding or appreciating the art that goes into. I’m talking about the girls that don’t even bother to tip the queens. Girl, bye. It’s just all about respect. Don’t ask a gay couple who’s the boy and who’s the girl. They’re both the boy. That’s the point. Don’t tell a guy that he should make out with you because it doesn’t count, or tell him that he doesn’t even look gay. During these dark political days, treat the LGBT communities like humans, not cartoon character purse puppies, and they will be the most welcoming group of people you’ll ever meet.

Major and Minor Key Differences: Playing Metal in New Haven

In many metal music scenes, those playing in bands could be considered some of the scenes most notable influencers. Three of my participants played in either hardcore or metal bands in New Haven. All three discussed their playing days, and two are still playing. The female participant played in a hardcore/punk band from 2011-2013. One male participant (“P.C.”) plays in band that is described as being “...for fans of *The Black Album*, *Dehumanizer*, *Dirt*, *Badmotorfinger*³⁶ and about 95 other random bands in a blender...” This male participant is a man of colour, and plays in a metal band, but has a background playing and participating in the hardcore genre. I asked each of them what playing in

³⁶ Albums, respectively, by Metallica (1991), Black Sabbath (1992), Alice in Chains (1992), and Soundgarden (1991).

an alternative or metal band in New Haven was like. Interestingly, both said that “buzz”, as described in Diana Miller’s³⁷ article, is not as important when compared to the Toronto music scene. While word of mouth was still somewhat important, both found that advertising through Facebook, or fans sharing YouTube videos via text or social media was the best way to get people in the door at their shows. The participant (“P.C.”) has very positive views on playing in New Haven, and had nothing but good things to say about both playing live and the New Haven metal scene:

I'm quite the transplant in the metal scene here, so I've felt a little bit apprehensive about standing out and not being accepted or viewed as an equal, in knowledge or in lifestyle. In walking amongst the people of the metal community, I quickly found how accepting of a community it is. As I said above, I think society as a whole largely paints the metal community as a bit outcast and withdrawn, but in New Haven that couldn't be farther from the truth. The metal community understands what it's like to be stereotyped, and in kind, is one of the most inclusive groups of people you can find. If you're a woman, have dark skin, or both, I think you'll find that no one will be judging you. We're all equal down here. Sex, race, religion - they're all just different sub-genres of the same music.

The participant’s comments once again bring up issues of white, male, and in this case, straight/heterosexual privilege that has been discussed earlier in this chapter. Peter claiming that sex, race, and religion are “...all just different sub-genres of the same music” highlights that he is either unaware of, or does not recognize, savage inequalities or privileges that come with being white, male, or heterosexual. This is echoed in other studies done on gender and race in metal. Whereas men are automatically discerned to be “true fans”, scholars such as Sonia Vasan have highlighted the precarious path that women in metal scenes must walk to be taken seriously, ranging from metal music genre knowledge to corporal styling³⁸. Laina Dawes has indicated that more often than not, women of colour and men of colour are asked “What are you doing here?” when attending a metal gig, an occurrence that seemingly rarely happens to white men³⁹. In “Metal, masculinity, and the queer subject”, Amber R. Clifford-Napoleone indicates that when she first brought her girlfriend to a

³⁷ Miller, “Symbolic Capital and Gender”.

³⁸ Sonia Vasan, *Women's participation in the death metal subculture* (Houston: University of Houston, 2010).

³⁹ Dawes, *What Are You Doing Here?*

metal show, she was ‘very nervous, bordering on scared’⁴⁰. While the white male participant believes that sex, race, and religion are all different sub-genres of the same music, the experiences of those in marginalized groups indicates something very different: a proverbial cacophony of horror.

My female participant “T” who played in New Haven indicates as much:

I definitely think that the New Haven scene can do better. One problem I dealt with a lot playing in a band was that guys would come up to me and tell me things like, "You have a great voice for a girl!" or "I love FEMALE FRONTED bands!" My band felt like we only got praise because we were 3/4 female.

This participant highlights issues of women playing in alternative/metal bands. Arguably, mass produced heavy metal music has always created and portrayed gender roles. The music industry is dominated by men, who overwhelmingly control the position of music executive, music journalist, fan, academic, and listener⁴¹. This participant referred to how she was deemed a “girl”, or that her band was described as a “female fronted band”, therefore being transformed into a peculiar ‘other’. Instead of being praised for being excellent musicians, this participant felt as if it was solely because of her and her bandmates gender, almost making them a gimmick. This gimmicky element was also explored by Diana Miller:

However, in Toronto, being a woman in a metal act was a detriment: in lieu of praise, women in metal bands in Toronto received ire. Miller’s work shows that in the Toronto metal music scene, having a woman band member can negatively impact the reputation of a band, with female band members being written off by one of Miller’s field subjects (who also identified himself as being the lead singer of a metal band within the same scene) as being “gimmicks”, becoming the sole audience attention grabbing member of the band so that the guitarist can ‘take a holiday and play something really boring.’⁴²

In this case, Toronto, much like New Haven, could and can do a lot better regarding issues of gender in heavy metal or alternative music scene performers.

⁴⁰ Clifford-Napoleone, “Metal, Masculinity and the queer subject.”

⁴¹ Marion Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry: Rock, Discourse and Girl Power* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2007).

⁴² Miller, “Symbolic Capital and Gender”.

Conclusions

As mentioned prior to the conclusion, this chapter will contain an autoethnographic element in this space. I was inspired to write this chapter, based off a presentation that I did at the Modern Heavy Metal Conference 2017. I wanted to explore my own local metal scene, and see if the problems that were present in so many other areas of the world's metal scenes were there.

Limitations in my data collection exist. I collected data via Facebook, so the collection was limited to people that I knew already, or friends of friends. Additionally, I conducted this research from London. I also conducted my interviews via email, text, or Skype, allowing for no face to face interactions.

Race, gender, LGBTQ issues and metal, have been discussed in metal music studies since its onset. Social issues raised within this study have been studied by other metal music scholars: along with the excellent scholarship of the aforementioned Laina Dawes⁴³, other scholars, like Jasmine Shadrack⁴⁴ (of Denigrata, a feminist black metal band), Amber R. Clifford-Napoleone⁴⁵, Rosemary Lucy Hill⁴⁶, and Gabby Riches⁴⁷ have each tackled issues of race, LGBTQ and gender in metal music or metal music scenes. Clearly, LGBTQ issues, as well as issues of race and gender, still need to be addressed both academically and in metal music scholarship. Something is unfortunate around issues of inclusion in metal music and in metal music academia, and we as scholars and fans need to continue to shed a light upon it.

As the data I collected indicates, the same issues of race, sexual preference, and gender are present in New Haven. Unsurprisingly, the data that I collected seems to show that it takes those who are members of communities that are marginalized to see these inequalities, or to point them out. Members outside of those groups could potentially be blinded by the various privileges they have (be it white privilege, straight/

⁴³ Dawes, *What Are You Doing Here?*

⁴⁴ Shadrack, "Get Over It."

⁴⁵ Clifford-Napoleone, "Metal, Masculinity and the queer subject."

⁴⁶ Rosemary Lucy Hill, *Gender, Metal and the Media: Women Fans and the Gendered Experience of Music* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁴⁷ Gabby Riches, "Sensuous Entanglements, Assemblages and Convergences: Extreme Metal Scenes as 'Sensory Communities'," in *Modern Heavy Metal: Markets, Practices and Cultures*, eds. Toni-Matti Karjalainen and Kimi Kärki (Helsinki: Aalto University), 265-273.

heterosexual privilege, or male privilege), and are unable to speak against the disparities that occur in your fan experience in New Haven, if you are not male or white. As a scholar of metal music studies, and as someone who was born in New Haven (and who will rest her bones there), I feel as if it is my duty to shed a light on these issues. This is because I care about the metal music scene, and metal music academia, and in order to fix an issue and make it better, the repairs have to start at home.

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