

**AN EXPLORATION OF HOW SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH EXPERIENCE HEAVY
METAL MUSIC**

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REMARKS

- The reader is kindly requested to take note that although the mini-dissertation was published within the field of Medical Sociology, the study is purely Sociological in nature.
- The reader may also take note that this mini-dissertation has been written in the NWU approved article format, which consists of an introductory chapter, one research article containing the main findings of the study, and a final chapter outlining the conclusions, limitations, and recommendations pertaining to the study.

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SUMMARY

Topic: an exploration of how South African youth experience Heavy Metal music

Key terms: Heavy Metal music, youth, South Africa, music, qualitative research

This mini-dissertation presents a discussion of the qualitative study exploring how South African youth, between the ages of 18 and 35, who are active listeners of Heavy Metal music experience this genre of music. The sample in the present study consists of 26 South African youths, living in various parts of the country, who listen to Heavy Metal music. Participants were recruited from attendees of the Heavy Metal music festival, Witchfest, which took place in Newtown, Johannesburg during 3-5 April 2015. An explorative qualitative research design was used. Three methods were used to gather data for the research study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual participants, and one focus group session was also carried out. Participants were approached at random times throughout Witchfest. Interview questions for both the semi-structured interviews and for the focus group session consisted of themes relating to the participants' introduction to Heavy Metal music, how they experience Heavy Metal music, whether or not the music influences their relationships, and whether they experience Heavy Metal music as dangerous or violent in nature. Data was also gathered using unstructured nonparticipant observation, and therefore the behaviour and appearance of festival attendees was also observed at varying times throughout Witchfest.

The results show that many participants were introduced to Heavy Metal music via their families and friends. This was mostly because these family members and friends listened to Heavy Metal music themselves. This, participants stated, was a very important factor in their experiences of Heavy Metal music because the commonality of listening to the music brings people closer together and strengthens the bonds between them. Apart from the music enhancing their relationships, participants also noted that Heavy Metal music evokes positive emotions within them and contributes to their well-being, owing to the fact that they often experience the act of listening to this genre of music as therapeutic and as an outlet for their negative feelings. These findings contradict dominant views held by non-listeners of Heavy Metal music, namely that this music causes dangerous and negative feelings and

behaviours, and shed light on the influence that this genre of music has on South African youth. On the other hand, findings also showed that the social setting surrounding Heavy Metal is associated with the frequent consumption of drugs and large amounts of alcohol. Although participants claimed that drugs and alcohol tend to enhance their experiences of Heavy Metal music festivals and of the music itself, the potentially harmful consequences of this practice cannot be ignored and requires additional investigation.

The mini-dissertation is concluded with a chapter that outlines the conclusions and limitations related to the study, and on this basis, several recommendations were proposed for future research and practical application of the findings. Some of these recommendations include that future studies include a broader range of data gathering, and a wider variation of participants. It is suggested that future researchers attend one or two more Heavy Metal music festivals to attain this varied sample. Also, due to the fact that most Heavy Metal music listeners are older in age, further studies on the topic could increase the age in the sample selection criteria to 35 and above. Also, in order to avoid including participants that are intoxicated in any way, prospective studies could obtain participants by means other than from Heavy Metal music festivals, in settings free from drugs and alcohol.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this chapter is to orient the reader to the study on which the mini-dissertation is based. The main aim of the study presented here is to explore how South African youth who are part of the Heavy Metal music sub-culture experience this genre of music. A brief introduction is followed by an overview pertaining to the background of Heavy Metal music, as well as a review of existing literature on the topic. The research problem is outlined next, which is followed by an outline of the main research questions and the aims guiding the study. Ontological and epistemological positions are also described, followed by a discussion of the research methodology that guided the study. Ethical matters related to the present study are also described and the chapter is concluded with an outline of the division of chapters of the mini-dissertation.

1.1 Introduction

Over the last few years, a significant number of studies have been conducted on Heavy Metal music in relation to the youth and there is a considerable amount of research available on the topic. The results of these studies are rather varied in that Heavy Metal music has been found to affect the youth positively in some instances, and negatively in others (Berger, 1999:161; Klypchak, 2011:48; Mulder, *et al.*, 2009:515; Selfhout, *et al.*, 2008:435). In some cases the music was found to have positive, even therapeutic, influences in that it could serve as an outlet for disgruntled youngsters, who find themselves in difficult social situations such as poverty and troubled households (Harrison, 2010:153).

However, due to the complexity, intensity, and rebellious nature of its content, Heavy Metal music has been the centre of a substantial amount of social negativity and controversy (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:24). A sizable amount of alarm has been raised by the media, parental figures, educational authorities, and religious institutions in relation to Heavy Metal music (Brown, 2011:19). According to some studies, such as that by Becknell *et al.*, (2008:24), Heavy Metal music has been implicated in youth suicide, violence, aggression and other behavioural issues. However, these issues were found to have been present before the youth's preferences for Heavy Metal music developed (Selfhout *et al.*, 2008: 445). Moreover, it has been found that Heavy Metal music is subjectively experienced in different ways by different

people, and that its influence depends on people's social context, attitudes, perceptions and individual personalities (Berger, 1999:171).

Other factors also previously investigated in terms of the experiences and the influence of Heavy Metal music are those of gender, race, and religion. Gender and racial divisions are rather unequal, with most Heavy Metal music fans being male and white (Fellezs, 2011:180; Hickam & Wallach, 2011:255). Moreover, Heavy Metal music has been associated with sinister depictions, symbols and other representations, especially with regards to religion and spirituality, and this has played a major part in its condemnation as an anti-religious type of music (Moberg, 2012:113). Nevertheless, Heavy Metal music has been found to function in many of the same ways as religion does (Moberg, 2012:128). This, it was found, is because Heavy Metal music serves to bring listeners together under a common interest (Harris, 2000:13). This allows for opportunities for social interaction and support, as is the case with many religions, which likewise provide such opportunities for social interaction and support (Harris, 2000:13). Also, listeners of Heavy Metal music often self-reflect, and express themselves through the music, and this provides them with opportunities for self-actualisation, or realisation, and transcendence (Martin, 2011:92).

Although numerous youths listen to Heavy Metal music in South Africa, it never gained the same popularity in South Africa as it has on the international front (Pretorius, 2013). Heavy Metal music developed in South Africa in the 1980s, during times of racial and political turmoil. It developed through Afrikaans Rock musicians such as Koos Kombuis and Johannes Kerkorrel, who rose up to challenge political injustices at the time (Grundlingh, 2004:484). Later, Heavy Metal music gained some popularity among the youth in the country, due to increasing exposure to international media, especially from countries such as the United States of America (Senekal, 2011:76). Currently, Heavy Metal music is very slowly starting to increase in popularity in South Africa, especially among the youth (Pretorius, 2013).

1.1.1 Heavy Metal music

Common conceptions of Heavy Metal music are that it is an extremely loud and highly aggressive type of music (Harrison, 2010:153). In order to understand these and other notions about Heavy Metal music, its roots and contextual development need to be outlined.

Heavy Metal music first developed in Birmingham, England, in the 1960s (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:24). Birmingham, at the time, was a society characterised by alcoholism, drug abuse, aggression, and domestic disputes. These social issues and disputes often resulted from work dissatisfaction that was characteristic of the working-class and industry-focused society of the time (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:24; Harrison, 2010:146). Many residents of Birmingham were overcome with stress and repressed anger due to their often harsh working environments and meagre wages (Harrison, 2010:146). Youth, due to their often tumultuous familial and school lives, were frequently under an equal amount of stress (Harrison, 2010:146). Heavy Metal music developed as a response to these stressful circumstances, and first emerged with British bands such as Black Sabbath, Judas Priest and later, Led Zeppelin (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:24).

Heavy Metal music was strongly influenced in its development by other genres of music, such as Blues, Jazz, and Rock (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:24). The British band Black Sabbath used elements from each of these genres when creating their music (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:24). Other Heavy Metal music bands also incorporated these genres into their music, giving Heavy Metal music its highly unique sound and energy (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:24).

At the time of its emergence, owing to its loud, defiant and seemingly aggressive nature, Heavy Metal music became a symbol of rebellion and insubordination (Harrison, 2010:146). The lyrics, vocals, and sounds of Heavy Metal music are often written in opposition to authorities and institutions such as school and the Church, and thus this has led to a great amount resistance to this genre of music among such authorities (Moberg, 2012:113). Parents, teachers, religious institutions, and other authoritative figures exhibited a considerable amount of concern about this defiant music and the youth who listen to it (Klypchak, 2011:38; Moberg, 2012:113).

This pattern of parental concern continues today in many parts of the world, and is reflected in a lot of parental and authoritative opposition towards Heavy Metal music (Barron, 2011:70; Brown, 2011:19). However, despite reports of higher delinquency related to youth listening to Heavy Metal music, it was found that the delinquent behaviour was present prior to these youth listening to the music (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:25). These behaviours thus appear to have resulted from other factors such as the youth's social and personal situations, and not necessarily from the music itself (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:25).

Furthermore, Selfhout *et al.*, (2008:287) indicate a positive association with Heavy Metal music with the occurrence of opportunities for self-expression and identity development. Heavy Metal music appeals to listeners because it often portrays anger, loneliness, and sadness, as well as happiness, excitement, and passion. On a whole, many people can identify with several or most of these experiences (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:25). Moreover, due to its loud and intense nature, Heavy Metal music provides its listeners with opportunities to release their suppressed energies and frustrations (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:25).

In the 40 years since its emergence, Heavy Metal music went on to develop into a highly complex music genre with a large selection of different sub-genres, including thrash metal, death metal, black metal, grindcore, glam metal, nu metal, progressive metal, alternative metal, and Christian metal, each with its own unique perspective on the use of lyrical and instrumental content, pace and intensity of sound (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:24; Moberg, 2012:113).

1.1.2 Music and the youth

According to research, music plays an important part in the lives of the youth (Mulder *et al.*, 2009:515). It has been found that music can aid in youth's relationship formation and peer involvement (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:25). Music is also directly involved in the formation of their social and personal identities (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:25; Mulder *et al.*, 2009:515), and can represent a means of self-expression for many youths (Badaoui *et al.*, 2012:568; Baker & Bor, 2008:287; Selfhout *et al.*, 2008:436). Music can even play a therapeutic role, with studies showing major improvements in the coping abilities of youth with physical disabilities who listen to music (Brown & Jellison, 2012:335). Listening to any kind of music often provides people with powerful experiences and as such, music is important and meaningful to many people (Marshall, 2011:157).

However, music may also have negative outcomes as connections have been found between certain types of popular music and negative, high-risk behaviours such as substance abuse and even suicide (Baker & Bor, 2008:284; Brown, 2011:19; Mulder *et al.*, 2009:515). Media and parental reports indicate that youth's behaviours are negatively affected by their listening to certain genres of music (Barron, 2011:70). As a consequence, parents and other

authoritative figures have become increasingly concerned about the youth's risk of violent behaviour, which they often believe to be directly related to the youth listening to certain types of popular music (Brown, 2011:19).

1.1.3 Heavy Metal music and the youth

There is a lot of controversy related to Heavy Metal music and its influence on the youth (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:24). International studies, such as that by Barron (2011:70), state that since its origination, Heavy Metal music has been viewed as socially harmful to the youth, and it has been associated with youth rebellion. Certain studies on the effects of Heavy Metal music on youth's well-being examined whether there is a link between listening practises and suicidal behaviours (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:25), and found that the lyrical content of Heavy Metal music could cause suicidal thoughts or acts. This, however, was never proven to be directly due to the type of music that these youth listen to (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:25).

Selfhout *et al.* (2008:447) investigate other negative effects of Heavy Metal music on youth in the Netherlands. Findings suggest that there are some associations between Heavy Metal music and certain risk behaviours, such as suicide attempts and drug consumption. However, factors such as upbringing, these youth's social situations, and their personalities were found to have a greater possibility of influencing youth's externalising or risk behaviours than the music that they listen to (Selfhout *et al.*, 2008:449).

Heavy Metal music is chiefly viewed as a male-orientated genre of music (Hickam & Wallach, 2011:255). Barron (2011:69) investigates links between what is described as extreme Heavy Metal music (and includes sub-genres of Heavy Metal music such as thrash and death Metal) and gender. It was assumed in the study that the lyrical content, album imagery, and video performances of extreme Heavy Metal music, which often include violent depictions of women, may lead to oppression of women and sexism among Heavy Metal music listeners. Findings, however, showed that extreme Heavy Metal music (and its subgenres) portrays these violent depictions of women not to promote oppression of and violence against women, rather they serve to shock those outside of the Heavy Metal music 'scene', and serve as a means of rebellion against everyday societal views of gender. In addition, there is a large following among young women of Heavy Metal music despite these depictions, and many women who listen to Heavy Metal music have similar positive

experiences when listening to this genre of music as what young men experience (Hickam & Wallach, 2011:270).

Barron (2011:75), however, cautions that younger Heavy Metal music listeners might act on at least some of the negative depictions in extreme Heavy Metal music, and suggests that parents and other authoritative figures monitor their adolescent children's music listening behaviours, and that age restrictions be imposed on many of these extreme Heavy Metal music albums and videos.

In relation to the influence of Heavy Metal music on youth, or listeners, of different races, the study by Fellezs (2011:180) investigates how young African American listeners of Heavy Metal music experience this mainly white-male-orientated genre of music. The study found that owing to the broad nature of Heavy Metal music, and the orientations that it has in other genres of music such as Jazz and Rock, that it often draws and appeals to individuals from many different cultures and races. Moreover, it was found that due to the accepting nature of those who listen to Heavy Metal music, regardless of race, gender or age, individuals often feel comfortable and accepted within this 'scene'. This shows the unique influence of Heavy Metal music on its listeners as it promotes acceptance and non-discrimination (Fellezs, 2011:196).

Heavy Metal music appeals to a broad audience, and it has been suggested that youth's preferences for the music mainly comes from the fact that it is an intense and loud type of music, and that it gives its listeners the opportunity to release their repressed stress and frustrations, and this is what makes the music appealing (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:25). For the same reason, Heavy Metal music has also been stated as creating opportunities for self-expression and identity development (Pieslak, 2008:38).

1.2 Problem Statement

Several international studies have been conducted on the influences of Heavy Metal music among the youth (Berger, 1999:161; Mulder *et al.*, 2009:515). However, an extensive review of databases such as JSTOR, EBSCOHOST, Google scholar and SABINET failed to locate any studies on this topic in relation to South African youth. As such, relatively little is known about how South African youth experience Heavy Metal music. It is possible that the

absence of such an understanding might serve to contribute to the continued existence of negative stereotypes and associated concerns, judgements, and negative views that tend to be associated with this genre of music and projected upon those who listen to it (Barron, 2011:70; Brown, 2011:19). Furthermore, existing studies often draw upon quantitative methodologies (Badaoui *et al.*, 2012:571; Baker & Bor, 2008:284; Becknell *et al.*, 2008:25; Brown & Jellison, 2012:335; Hickam & Wallach, 2011:261), and as such, might not accurately capture participants' lived realities and subjective experiences in relation to this genre of music.

Gaining a better understanding of how South African youth experience Heavy Metal music would have several benefits. In addition to providing a clearer picture of the experiences of Heavy Metal music, it will also shed light on the subjectively perceived influences that this genre of music has on South African youth's well-being and behaviour. What's more, studying the experiences of Heavy Metal music in terms of youth' relationships would also have important implications, especially given that social relationships are so important within the lives of the youth (National Youth Policy of South Africa of 2009, section 12). Therefore, as exposure to Heavy Metal music might have a significant bearing on various aspects of well-being, identity, and relationships of South African youth, it would be of value to understand how South African youth experience Heavy Metal music in relation to these dimensions. In addition to representing a theoretical contribution to the fields of musicology and sociology (given that very little research has been conducted on this topic), such an understanding could also serve to deconstruct certain stereotypes and possible misconceptions that exist in relation to this genre of music and those who listen to it. Furthermore, findings from a study such as this could be of practical use to therapists and counsellors working with youth who listen to Heavy Metal music, by shedding light on the experiences, value, and influences that are experienced by youth in relation to this type of music.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the above, the following main and secondary research questions have been formulated to guide the study:

1.3.1 Main Research Question

- How do South African youth (who belong to the Heavy Metal music subculture) experience Heavy Metal music?

1.3.2 Secondary Research Questions

- How are South African youth introduced to Heavy Metal music?
- What are South African youth's experiences of Heavy Metal music in terms of their relationships with others?
- How does Heavy Metal music influence South African youth's emotions?
- How does Heavy Metal music influence the well-being of South African youth?
- In what way does the seemingly aggressive and violent nature of Heavy Metal music influence South African youth?

1.4 Research Objectives

The following general and specific research objectives were set for this study:

1.4.1 General Research Objective

- The main aim of the study is to explore the experiences of Heavy Metal music among South African youth who belong to the Heavy Metal music subculture.

1.4.2 Specific Research Objectives

- To explore how South African youth are introduced to Heavy Metal music
- To explore the experience of Heavy Metal music in terms of South African youth's relationships with others.
- To explore the influence of Heavy Metal music on South African youth's emotions
- To explore the influence of Heavy Metal music on the well-being of South African youth.
- To explore the seemingly aggressive and violent nature of Heavy Metal music and its influence on South African youth.

1.5 Ontological, Epistemological, and Theoretical Framework of the Study

This section is devoted to matters relating to the ontological, epistemological and theoretical perspectives that are applicable to the study.

1.5.1 Ontological and epistemological assumptions guiding the study

The present study is informed by an interpretivist ontology and a constructivist epistemology. Ontology refers to the study of reality and truth, and the ways in which people see the world (Sarantakos, 2005:30). In an interpretivist ontology, reality is viewed as being relative and subjective, constructed and interpreted by humans rather than objective, ‘out there’ and given, and therefore varying from person to person (Scotland, 2012:9). This view is relevant in the present study, which aims to explore participants’ subjective views of reality with regards to Heavy Metal music. In line with the tenets of an interpretivist ontology, the researcher regards this ‘reality’ as being relative and contextual, and not as pre-existing and objective.

Epistemology deals with questions concerning evidence and knowledge within a social context (Sarantakos, 2005:30), and is concerned with how knowledge is created, acquired and communicated among research participants (Scotland, 2012:9). The constructivist epistemology holds that knowledge is constructed by people in interaction through a process of interpretation. As such, knowledge is viewed as created, rather than pre-existing as objective facts that are independent from any observer and waiting to be discovered by empirical means (Sarantakos, 2005:30). This view is also adopted in the present study, as the researcher does not seek to uncover any pre-existing ‘truth’ about the influence of Heavy Metal music on South African youth, but wishes to obtain an insider perspective of the subjective, socially constructed aspects of this phenomenon as experienced by the participants. These ontological and epistemological positions have been operationalised in the present study by utilising a qualitative research methodology, which is derived from an interpretivist ontology and a constructivist epistemology.

1.5.2 Theoretical Framework

Along with the broader ontological and epistemological frameworks outlined in the previous section, the study is also guided by sociological perspectives and theoretical frameworks. The theory of symbolic interactionism, with which theorists focus on individuals’ use of language

during interaction, the symbols applicable to their culture, and the meanings that they assign to these interactions and symbols (Ferrante, 2008:36), is one theory that relates to the current study. This important sociological theory is often used by theorists observing individuals' social interactions and the perceptions and meanings that arise from these social interactions (Ferrante, 2008:36). What's more, socialisation, which is a sociological concept that illustrates how young people learn through observing and modelling the behaviours of their parents and other authoritative figures (Ferrante, 2008:86), is also applicable to the current study. Yet another sociological concept, known as social cohesion, which deals with the unity that develops among individuals in a social group, is also significant to the current study (Forsyth, 2010:14). Social cohesion is often useful when viewing situations where individuals interact with one another and where a tight-knit bond develops between them (Forsyth, 2010:14). Other sociological concepts that are applicable to the current study include entativity, which is a concept that refers to the unity among a group of people, and is determined by similarities in behaviours (Forsyth, 2010:14). Ingroup and outgroup processes are also relevant to the current study, and refer to the conflicts that arise between the often dominant ingroup and the subordinate outgroup (Forsyth, 2010:420). Ingroup versus outgroup dynamics are often applied in circumstances where conflicts arise between the dominant group and subordinate group within a said culture (Forsyth, 2010:420). Sub-cultures are also applicable to the current study in that they constitute the development of a culture within a culture, with its own beliefs, values and norms. Sub-cultures often develop in response to the development of conflict between the members of the subculture and those belonging to the larger, dominant culture (Ferrante, 2008:58). In addition, the sociological concept of norms is also relevant to the current study, and is related to the unwritten rules that are applicable to a particular social context or society (Ferrante, 2008:58). The concepts of stereotyping and labelling, which relate to the negative views and judgments that people ascribe to others based on their highly unusual differences, are also applicable to the current study (Ferrante, 2008:133). Finally, well-being, a concept particularly relevant to medical sociology, is also significant with regards to the present study. Well-being is a holistic concept describing an individual's level of health (Cockerham, 2003:3). If an individual possesses high levels of well-being then he or she is physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually well or healthy (Cockerham, 2003:3).

1.6 Research Method

1.6.1 Phase 1: Literature Review

During the first phase of the study a comprehensive literature review was undertaken in order to obtain important contextual information in relation to the research topic. Such a review provides the researcher with background knowledge on the research topic, and helps to refine the research topic (Boote & Beile, 2005). A literature review also aids the researcher in identifying a research gap, as a search of previous studies will provide the researcher with a view of how much information is available on the topic, and how many studies have been completed on the topic (Boote & Beile, 2005). Internet databases such as JSTOR, EBSCOHOST, Google scholar and SABINET have been used to gather literature relevant to the study in the form of scholarly articles, books, and other sources. Keywords applicable to the search included: Heavy Metal music, youth, South Africa, music, and qualitative research. Units of literature that were found were screened and consequently either included in the study or rejected based on their relevance to the research aims that have been set for the study.

1.6.2 Phase 2: Empirical Study

The following section provides an overview of the empirical phase of the study, and outlines matters such as the research design, participant selection, data collection, research procedures, and data analysis strategies relevant to the study.

Research design

Social research allows investigators to enter and study people's personal and social contexts (Sarantakos, 2008:4), and requires the use of a research method that is suitable to the question presented in the study (Hancock *et al.*, 2009:6). Two approaches are used in social research, namely quantitative research and qualitative research (Sarantakos, 2008:28). For the purpose of the present study, which investigates the subjective experiences of South African youth in relation to Heavy Metal music, a qualitative approach was adopted.

Qualitative research is a method of collecting and analysing information about human phenomena that allows the researcher to interpret and obtain meaning from the information (Fouche, 2004:468). It involves the exploration of people's subjective experiences and views

of phenomena (Hancock *et al.*, 2009:4). With qualitative research the researcher assumes an interpretative, constructivist, and inductive stance, and aims to gain an understanding of how people experience and explain their world through their interactions and behaviours. Qualitative research is a flexible method of research in which a variety of data collection and analysis methods are employed, based on the nature of the study (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009:2).

The researcher employed a qualitative research methodology in the present study because she wanted to gain an understanding of South African youth's subjective experiences of Heavy Metal music, with a specific focus on their interpretations, understandings, beliefs, knowledge, and views of Heavy Metal music. The researcher also aimed to understand these youth's social contexts, and related processes with regards to Heavy Metal music. A qualitative approach would result in more richly textured and nuanced findings, and is better able to capture the subjective lived realities of these participants than would have been the case if a quantitative approach was employed.

Participants

The units of analysis used in qualitative research can consist of any phenomena applicable to human perception and experience, or they could be made up of individuals, or groups of individuals, who are questioned or observed by the researcher (Guest *et al.*, 2013:27). In the case of the present study, data was obtained from 26 participants between the ages of 18 and 35, who listen to Heavy Metal music. These participants all attended a three-day Heavy Metal music festival known as Witchfest, which occurred during the weekend of 3-5 April 2015.

Witchfest is a South African Heavy Metal music festival. The festival was organised by the South African Heavy Metal music production company known as Witchdoctor Productions, which formed in 1999 (Witchdoctor Productions, 2015). Since its emergence, Witchdoctor Productions has played a major role in the growth of Heavy Metal music in South Africa by organising live events and festivals, such as Witchfest, as well as organising performances in South Africa by international bands such as Kataklysm, a Canadian Heavy Metal band, and Sepultura, a Brazilian Heavy Metal band (Witchdoctor Productions, 2015). The very first Witchfest festival occurred in Midrand, Johannesburg, on 16 December 2003

(Witchdoctor Productions, 2015). The festival took place annually until 2008, when, due to unknown reasons, Witchfest was discontinued (Witchdoctor Productions, 2015). Seven years later, Witchfest was revived, spanning an entire weekend of April 2015, at Bassline in Newton, Johannesburg (Witchdoctor Productions, 2015). The line-up at Witchfest 2015 included international acts such as the American band Cannibal Corpse and Scottish Heavy Metal band Alestorm (Witchdoctor Productions, 2015). South African Heavy Metal bands Agro and Voice of Destruction, among others, were also included in the line-up (Witchdoctor Productions, 2015). Witchfest presents South Africans belonging to the Heavy Metal music sub-culture with opportunities to interact with fellow fans of the music genre and to engage with the music and musicians alike.

The sampling methods best suited to the aims and approaches of the study include the non-probability methods of purposive sampling and snowball sampling (Sarantakos, 2005:163). Purposive sampling is a qualitative method in which the researcher chooses participants for a study that he or she believes are best suited to achieving the aims of the particular study (Sarantakos, 2005:164). Given that the researcher aimed to undertake a study of a specific group of people (South African youth who listen to Heavy Metal music), this sampling approach was deemed to be suitable. The following specific inclusion criteria were set to guide the recruiting of participants for the present study:

- Participants must be South African.
- Participants must be between 18 and 35 years of age. (According to section 11 of the National Youth Policy of South Africa (2009) youth can be defined as young people aged 14 to 35. Given the fact that many studies conducted internationally indicate that older youth tend to listen to Heavy Metal music (Baker & Bor, 2008:284; Harris, 2000:13; Mulder *et al.*, 2009:515), the current study focused on gathering data from South African youth between the ages of 18 and 35.)
- Participants must be Heavy Metal music listeners.

Snowball sampling occurs when the researcher asks the participants who have already taken part in a particular research study to recommend other fitting research participants for the study (Sarantakos, 2005:165). This method is usually used when the researcher requires additional participants for the study, and makes use of the social ties that sometimes exist

between people who share a given interest, such as Heavy Metal music. Snowball sampling was useful in the current study because it enabled the researcher to obtain a suitable number of participants for the study. The researcher employed snowball sampling, as needed, throughout the data gathering phase. Furthermore, the researcher (who attended the Witchfest festival) ensured that she was at her tent, at any time before the performances commenced, throughout the weekend so that potential research participants could approach her for an interview.

While sample size in qualitative research is determined by factors such as theoretical saturation and can therefore not be specified exactly prior to the research process (Sarantakos, 2005:163), an initial aim was set to include 20 participants in the study. Overall, 26 South African youth who listen to Heavy Metal music, and who were attending a large Heavy Metal music festival known as Witchfest, participated in the study. Of these 26 participants, 22 took part in the individual, semi-structured interviews, which were conducted at varying times throughout Witchfest and at various locations on the festival grounds, while 6 participated in the focus group session, which took place by the researcher's tent on the last day of Witchfest. Two participants took part in both the focus group session and the semi-structured interviews.

Of the 26 participants, 19 were male and 7 were female, while 2 were of mixed race, 1 black, and 23 participants were white. Before commencing with the interview questions, participants were given the option to answer in either English or Afrikaans; 2 participants opted to answer the questions in Afrikaans, while the remainder answered the questions in English. Participants who took part in the study reside in a variety of different areas of the country, such as Mpumalanga, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. (Additional characteristics of the participants and the setting are discussed in the findings section of chapter 2).

Data collection

When devising data collection strategies for a given study, it is important that the researcher ascertains which are the main aims and sub-aims of the research study (Guest *et al.*, 2013:26), as each of these aspects, which include behaviours, attitudes, perceptions, opinions, knowledge, emotions, values, meaning, social structures, relationships, processes,

systems, and contexts, requires different data collection approaches (Guest *et al.*, 2013:26). The data collection strategies that were deemed to be most suited to the aims of the present study included the use of semi-structured individual interviews, focus group interviews, and unstructured nonparticipant observation. The remainder of this section is devoted to a thorough discussion of these strategies.

During interviews, researchers and participants engage in face-to-face or telephonic conversations, and here the researcher asks the participants questions and records their answers (Ferrante, 2008:44). Semi-structured interviews consist of a series of open-ended questions that are based on the topic of the study, and that are in line with the research aims (Guest *et al.*, 2013:8). Open-ended questions produce lengthy and meaningful responses to research questions (Guest *et al.*, 2013:8). The researcher may also make use of probing, during which the researcher encourages the participant to provide additional information with regards to their responses (Bufkin, n.d.). What's more, this open-ended quality that occurs within the questions of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher and participants to discuss the themes and questions in greater detail; therefore leading to meaningful and more nuanced responses (Guest *et al.*, 2013:8). Due to this open-ended nature, semi-structured interviews were used for the present study.

Semi-structured interviews are typically guided by an interview schedule which outlines a series of questions that are posed to participants. These questions need to be in line with the topic of the study and need to produce suitable results that achieve the goals and aims of the study (Guest *et al.*, 2013:8). In line with the aims that were set for the study, the following questions were formulated, and formed the basis for both the semi-structured interviews as well as the focus group discussion:

1. How were you introduced to Heavy Metal music? / When did you first start listening to heavy metal music, and why?
2. Can you explain how you experience listening to Heavy Metal music?
 - a. More specifically, how do you experience the content of the lyrics of Heavy Metal music?
 - b. How do you experience the instrumental aspects of Heavy Metal music?
2. How does your 'relationship' with Heavy Metal music affect your relationships with your family, friends and others close to you?

3. What have been your best and worst experiences of Heavy Metal music?
4. How do you feel about the notion that Heavy Metal music causes violent or dangerous behaviour in those who listen to it?

Twenty two semi-structured interviews were conducted in the present study, 8 of which were conducted on the first day, 8 on the second day and 6 on the final day of Witchfest, which took place during 3-5 April 2015. Of the 22 participants who took part in the semi-structured interviews, 20 were white, 1 black and 1 was of mixed race. A total of 7 females took part in the semi-structured interviews, while the rest were male. Although participants were given the option to refuse to answer or skip certain questions; none of the participants opted to do so and they answered all the questions. Participants appeared very comfortable throughout the interviewing process and the researcher was also able, in most cases, to successfully make use of probing and encourage participants to provide additional information to the questions asked. Participants were also given the option to answer the questions in either English or Afrikaans, and 2 participants opted to answer the questions in Afrikaans, while the rest chose to converse in English.

Focus groups consist of a group of people who are brought together for the purpose of completing a study on a certain phenomenon, and are asked about their feelings and views with regards to this phenomenon (Anon, n.d:6; Sarantakos, 2005:194). Within focus groups, culturally-formed and group-based issues are typically discussed with regards to the research topic (Guest *et al.*, 2013:8). During a focus group, the researcher is tasked to guide the discussion and listens, observes, asks questions, and keeps the group on topic (Sarantakos, 2005:194). Here the researcher has less control over the course of the discussion and thus the group can easily go off topic, and provide trivial information. As such, the researcher must re-direct the topic of discussion to the topic of the research study when necessary (Anon, n.d:6). Moreover, participants may also be reluctant to speak honestly in front of others within focus groups (Sarantakos, 2005:198), and this is why it is useful to make use of additional data collection methods such as individual interviews and unstructured observation in a research study. In addition, the main idea here is that each member of the group participates, and that the group has a discussion as a unit (Sarantakos, 2005:195). As a method of information gathering, the focus group provides information about group processes, impulsive and unprompted feelings, as well as reasons and explanations in terms

of people's attitudes and behaviours (Sarantakos, 2005:195). A focus group typically consists of about 7-10 people who have been selected because their characteristics relate to the topic of the study (Anon, n.d:6).

The focus group for the present study took place at Witchfest on 5 April 2015 and consisted of 6 participants; all of whom met the purposive sampling criteria. Two participants took part in the focus group session as well as the semi-structured interviews. The same set of questions that were posed to participants during the semi-structured interviews was also used as basis for the focus group interview. There were many occasions where the participants engaged in heated conversations in relation to the questions and each participant seemed eager to take part. Most of the participants who took part in the focus group session did not appear reluctant to speak, and seemed open and honest in their views with regards to the questions. Some participants shared rather intimate and personal experiences, such as the turmoil within their families.

Observation, which entails observing a group without making oneself known (McKechnie, 2013), was also used as a data collection method. This is to support the information obtained from the interviews and focus group and to obtain additional information for the study. The researcher made use of unstructured nonparticipant observation in the present study, and no contact was made with any of the Witchfest attendees during these observations. The researcher also did not intervene in the attendees' behaviours during the observation. Moreover, attendees were also not aware that the researcher was observing them.

During unstructured observation, the researcher has unspecific, unfocused, and informal ideas of what will be observed during the data collection phase (McKechnie, 2013). This means that the researcher attempts to obtain as much information as possible about the setting and the phenomenon under study, and does not focus on set aspects of the phenomenon (McKechnie, 2013).

Researchers also do not make use of any formal checklists when using unstructured observation (McKechnie, 2013). Also, unstructured observation is regularly used in interpretivist and constructivist research (McKechnie, 2013); this is in line with the present

study, which was conducted from an interpretivist and constructivist stance. The researcher spent roughly 3 hours a day observing the Witchfest attendees. During the early hours of the morning, the researcher walked around the camping area and observed attendees' social behaviours. The researcher also observed attendees as they were sitting around tables in the area where the food stalls had been set up, near the entertainment area. There was also a beer tent where attendees assembled, and the researcher also observed attendees there. Later during the day, once the performances commenced, the researcher conducted observations in the entertainment area, where most of the attendees gathered. Here the researcher further observed attendees' social behaviours and activities related to Heavy Metal music, such as head-banging and Moshpits. All observations were recorded in the form of raw notes as the researcher observed them (McKechnie, 2013). These notes were subsequently written up as formal field notes within a day of returning from the festival (McKechnie, 2013).

Research procedure

The participants, who had been selected via purposive and snowball sampling methods, and included young South Africans aged 18 to 35 who listen to Heavy Metal music, had been recruited from attendees at a large Heavy Metal music festival, named Witchfest, which took place over three days in April 2015. The researcher attended the festival as a participant observer. This festival suitably produced participants for the present study, because attendees at the festival met the purposive sampling criteria that had been set for the study. The festival drew Heavy Metal music listeners from many different areas of South Africa. Many festival attendees camped in a designated area close to the venue's entertainment area. The researcher also camped for the entire duration of the festival. Festival attendees were approached by the researcher at varying times during the course of the weekend, and requested to take part in the semi-structured interviews and/or the focus group interviews, after the nature, aims and ethical aspects pertaining to the study had been explained to them.

Twenty two semi-structured interviews were conducted at Witchfest. The semi-structured interviews took place at varying times during the festival. Eight interviews were conducted on the first day, 3 April 2015, 8 were conducted on the second day, 4 April 2015 and 6 were conducted on the final day, 5 April 2015. The duration of the interviews was between 15 and 35 minutes.

One focus group session was conducted at the festival. The focus group session took place in the morning on the final day of Witchfest, 5 April 2015. Two participants who took part in the initial interviews also took part in the focus group session, while the remainder of the focus group participants were approached by the researcher on the final day of the festival. The focus group session took place in the morning, before 10 am, outside the researchers' tent in the camping area on the festival grounds. At about 9 am, most festival attendees had woken up and made their way to the entertainment area, where they bought breakfast. The researcher approached several attendees within this entertainment area, and once a sufficient amount of participants agreed to take part in the focus group, the researcher led the group to the camping area and everyone gathered under a gazebo, outside the researchers' tent where the focus group was conducted. The duration of the focus group session was roughly 49 minutes.

All interviews were digitally recorded and these recordings were transcribed verbatim, and subjected to qualitative content analysis.

The researcher also observed Witchfest attendees and the participants throughout the duration of the festival, for a period of roughly 3 hours a day. Unstructured nonparticipant observation was used, and as such, the researcher did not communicate with or intervene in the attendees' behaviours during observation, and attendees were also not aware that the researcher was observing them. The researcher also had unspecific, unfocused, and informal expectations of what was to be observed, and obtained as much information as possible about the setting and attendees of Witchfest (McKechnie, 2013). The researcher recorded these observations in the form of raw notes in the field and transcribed these into field notes upon arriving home.

Data analysis

During the data analysis procedure the information that has been obtained from the data collection process is evaluated (Miles *et al.*, 2014:344). In qualitative research, data analysis requires a researcher with a good sense of creativity, divergent thinking, a keen perception of vague or unclear patterns, and superior writing skills (Miles *et al.*, 2014:344).

Within qualitative research, data are collected, coded, conceptualised, interrelated, and interpreted until the researcher believes that enough information is gathered (Sarantakos, 2005:344). This method allows for high quality, accurate information because with it the researcher is able to test, and confirm the information obtained throughout the research process (Sarantakos, 2005:345).

One method of data analysis within qualitative research consists of a process of thematic assessment. Here related themes are identified, coded and categorised (Miles *et al.*, 2014:277). During another data analysis method, which is known as the hierarchy method, themes are arranged from most important to least important (Miles *et al.*, 2014:277). Yet another strategy, the typology method, is used to identify and categorise certain typologies or catalogues (Miles *et al.*, 2014:277). The strategy of data analysis pertinent to the current study is the thematic method, which is described in the following sections.

Inductive thematic content analysis

The current study made use of an inductive and thematic content data analysis strategy. In analysing the themes identified in the information gathered for the study, the researcher followed approaches proposed in sources such as Guest *et al.* (2013:13). The researcher read through the textual data, which included interview and focus group transcripts as well as field notes, several times in order to familiarise herself with the data. Following this, data were segmented into units of meaning. Once the researcher identified important ideas in the data, she wrote these ideas in the form of code words. This involves assigning a descriptive label to each fragment of text that represents a new thought or idea related to the research topic. Throughout the analysis, the researcher ensured that she made notes, in the form of analytic memos, of those ideas that were interesting, extraordinary or that required further investigation. A second round of coding was undertaken during which the initial codes were refined. Redundant codes were deleted, similar codes were merged, and overly dense codes were split into sub-codes where relevant. After the coding process the researcher organised the codes into categories based on conceptual similarities. Where relevant, categories were integrated into overarching themes (Guest *et al.*, 2013:13). These codes and themes formed the basis of the research findings for the study (Guest *et al.*, 2013:13).

Quality Assurance

In order to ensure that the research is trustworthy or qualitatively legitimate, the researcher strived to adhere to certain standards of trustworthiness, which include credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and triangulation (Anon, n.d:7; Shenton, 2004:63).

Credibility

A study is credible if it presents as accurate a picture as possible of the phenomenon under investigation (Shenton, 2004:63). This has been ensured in the present study by purposively selecting participants whose personal characteristics are relevant to the research topic (Shenton, 2004:63). Moreover, the researcher ensured credibility by making use of three different data gathering methods (Shenton, 2004:63). The researcher also achieved credibility by verifying interpretations by means of a process of member checking, and by continuing to interview participants until data saturation had been reached (Shenton, 2004:63).

Transferability

The transferability of qualitative research findings refers to the degree to which the outcome of the research can be applied to the context of other studies, beyond the specific group under study (Shenton, 2004:63). In order to achieve this transferability in the present study, the context of the participants, as South African youth who listen to Heavy Metal music, was studied and comprehensively discussed. Others will now be able to undertake a comparison to their own contexts and in this way determine the extent to which the findings of the study might be transferable to other contexts. Also, transferability may be attained when the researcher describes the enquiry used in the study, and employs purposive sampling during the sample selection phase (Anney, 2014:278), which was the case in the present study.

Dependability

A research study is dependable if the findings remain stable over time (Anney, 2014:278). In order to ensure this, participants may check the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study, and the researcher may also re-confirm the study in the future in order to ascertain whether the findings have remained stable (Anney, 2014:278). This was

applied in the present study by way of member-checking, where the researcher confirmed participants' answers by asking some of them to read through the data, which were emailed to them before the data was analysed, and establish whether the findings still represented a valid reflection of their views and experiences.

Confirmability

Confirmability indicates the degree to which the results represent the experiences and views of the participants rather than that of the researcher (Shenton, 2004:63). By undertaking a process of member checking in the present study confirmability was enhanced. During member checking the researcher confirms that the participants' answers are accurately interpreted by consulting them in relation to the findings (Shenton, 2004:63). Confirmability was also supported by recording the participants' responses electronically, and by creating verbatim transcription of these recordings.

Triangulation

Triangulation must also be mentioned here; this entails a process of cross-checking data in order to strengthen the findings obtained (Anon, n.d:7). Research findings that have been acquired from many different people across different situations are more convincing than findings obtained from observing one person in one setting (Anon, n.d:7). With triangulation, researchers bring together different sources of information in order to form one idea (Anon, n.d:7). In the case of the present study method triangulation was employed, seeing that three methods of data collection were used.

1.7 Ethical Considerations

Due to the fact that human beings were involved in the study, as is commonly the case in sociological studies, the researcher had to be aware of ethical issues that might occur (Strydom, 2004:56), and it was considered important that information be obtained in a manner that is in the best interest of the participants (Strydom, 2004:56).

The present study exploring South African youth's experiences of Heavy Metal music followed ethical processes typically applicable to social research (Strydom, 2004:57). First, ethical clearance to conduct the study was obtained from the Human Health Research Ethics Committee of the North-West University, and from the organisers of the Witchfest festival.

During recruitment, potential participants were first informed of the topic and aims of the study. Participants were then asked whether they fully understood what the study entailed (Strydom, 2004:59). Participants were also informed that they were free to refuse to provide their personal information without penalty (Strydom, 2004:59).

Participants were furthermore informed that their identities would remain private and that their names or personal information would not be published in the final mini-dissertation. They were assured that only the researcher and the research supervisor would have access to their personal information; this was to ensure that the participants understood their rights with regards to confidentiality (Strydom, 2004:61). All information gathered has been stored on the researcher's personal laptop and a back-up is being kept on a memory stick at the researcher's home. Participants were asked to provide their first names and e-mail addresses for the purposes of communication in terms of member-checking, and to contact them with regards to feedback. The researcher contacted some participants in order to verify their responses, and feedback on the study and its findings was provided to those participants who stated that they wished to receive feedback.

Also, participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study without penalty, and as such, could stop the interview or focus group session at any time. Furthermore, participants were also given the option to exercise their right to refuse to answer specific questions if they felt at all uncomfortable. The researcher approached the data gathering process in a conversational style in order to ensure that participants felt comfortable, could identify with the researcher, and developed a degree of trust in the researcher. This also guaranteed that the researcher avoided harming the participants and evaded making them feel uneasy with the questions that were asked (Strydom, 2004:58).

Also, before obtaining their consent, the researcher ensured that participants were made aware of and understood their responsibilities with regards to the study. One such responsibility is that the participants needed to answer each question truthfully and to the best of their abilities (Code of Human Research Ethics, 2010:39). The participants were informed of these responsibilities and were consequently aware of the importance of the study and of these expectations.

Once the participants agreed that they understood the topic and aims of the study, and once they understood that they would be treated with respect, and that their personal information would be kept confidential, the researcher presented them with a letter of consent. The participants were requested to sign the letter of consent before commencing with the interview or focus group (see Appendix A). This letter provided concrete proof that the participants were willing to take part in the study and served to protect the interests of both the participants and the researcher (Strydom, 2004:59). Once informed consent was obtained, the researcher arranged a mutually convenient time and location for the interviews.

1.8 Chapter Division of the Mini Dissertation

The article method, as approved by the North-West University, was followed in the writing of the mini-dissertation. The layout of this work is outlined below.

Chapter 1: Introduction, problem statement, and objectives

Chapter 2: Article: An Exploration of how South African youth experience Heavy Metal music

Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations, and recommendations

1.9 Chapter Summary

The aim of this introductory chapter was to provide contextual information relevant to the study on which the mini-dissertation is based. The chapter commenced with a review of existing literature in relation to the nature and development of Heavy Metal music, as a prelude to outlining the central research aim guiding the study, which involves an exploration of the experiences of South African youth concerning Heavy Metal music. Following this, the ontological, epistemological, and theoretical frameworks guiding the study were discussed. Next, the methodology which was followed in conducting the study was outlined, and ethical matters pertinent to the study were discussed. The findings emanating from the study are presented in the form of a research article (which is in accordance with the article format as specified by the NWU) in the next chapter. In the final instance, the third chapter provides a detailed summary of the implications, limitations, and recommendations that are relevant to the study.

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY EXPLORING HOW A SAMPLE OF SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTHS WHO BELONG TO THE HEAVY METAL MUSIC SUB-CULTURE IN SOUTH AFRICA EXPERIENCE HEAVY METAL MUSIC

ABSTRACT

The following article explores how South African youth experience Heavy Metal music. Unlike international studies, many of which employ a quantitative methodology to their investigations of the influences of Heavy Metal music, a qualitative methodology was used in the present study to explore the experiences of South African youth aged 18 to 35. In order to complete a qualitative study, the researcher drew on participants' personal and subjective experiences of Heavy Metal music.

Semi-structured interviews, one focus group session, as well as unstructured nonparticipant observation were used to gather data for the study. The study explored several themes including that of relationships and behaviour in relation to participants' personal experiences. Participants were retrieved from attendees of the Heavy Metal music festival Witchfest, which took place during 3-5 April 2015. Aspects with regards to when, how and why participants started listening to Heavy Metal music, what their specific experiences are in terms of the social 'scene', the instruments, the lyrics, and participants' experiences of the music in terms of their relationships were also explored, as were their views and experiences of the music with regards to aggression and violence.

Findings revealed that participants were first introduced to Heavy Metal music through their family and friends, who also listen to the music. In terms of their experiences, many participants revealed that they experience Heavy Metal music as thrilling, and at the same time calming. This contradicts commonly held views that Heavy Metal music causes destructive and negative emotions and behaviours. Furthermore, participants stated that they experience the act of listening to Heavy Metal music as a constructive (rather than destructive) outlet form for their negative emotions. Participants also stated that they experience the social context associated with Heavy Metal music as supportive and friendly, and some participants even stated that they often receive the sort of emotional support from other Heavy Metal music that are not receiving from their families and friends. This furthermore illustrates the positive influence of Heavy Metal music, and opposes non-

listeners' views that this genre of music causes violence, aggression and other destructive emotions and behaviours. However, the study also produced findings related to the negative effects of Heavy Metal music. This is mainly related to these youths' consumption and abuse of drugs and alcohol. This causes concern for academics as well as the loved ones of these youths, as drug and alcohol abuse may be destructive to these youths' physical, emotional, and psychological health (Crowe, 1998).

Keywords: Heavy Metal music, youth, South Africa, music, qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

How do South African youth experience Heavy Metal music? How do these experiences influence these youth's relationships? How do South African youth experience the seemingly aggressive and violent nature of Heavy Metal music? How does Heavy Metal music influence youth's emotions? In what ways does this genre of music influence youth's well-being? The present article is devoted to addressing these questions.

Several international studies have been conducted that investigate the influence of Heavy Metal music on youth (Berger, 1999:161; Mulder *et al.*, 2009:515). An extensive review of literature related to South African youth's experiences of Heavy Metal music, however, revealed a lack of scholarly research on the topic. What's more, qualitative studies on the topic are also lacking, as current studies often draw on quantitative methodology, such as those conducted by Badaoui *et al.* (2012:571), Baker and Bor (2008:284), Becknell *et al.* (2008:25), Brown and Jellison (2012:335), and Hickam and Wallach (2011:261). The present study is thus aimed at addressing these gaps by undertaking a qualitative exploration of how South African youth experience Heavy Metal music.

Heavy Metal music and youth

As a media type, music influences youth in a variety of ways and serves a host of different functions. A number of studies explore these influences and functions of music in general. In their study of previous literature on the topic of popular music and youth, Mulder *et al.* (2009:515) find that youth, starting from early adolescence, tend to spend a great amount of time listening to music. This, the authors note, is because music often reflects these youth's feelings, concerns and fears, and also reflects important life events for them.

Another study conducted by Miranda *et al.* (2012:167) examines the possibilities of music serving to prevent certain negative behaviours, such as drug abuse, among the youth. The study was conducted with college students in Montreal, Canada, and findings reveal that youth who were highly involved with certain types of popular music, such as Heavy Metal music, did not show significant increases in drug abuse and other negative behaviours, and that these behaviours also decreased in some cases (Miranda *et al.*, 2012:166).

Moreover, the study by Baker & Bor (2008:287) illustrates several functions of music, namely that musical lyrics could be conducive to the development of the youth's personal identities, given that these lyrics often relate to their personal and social situations. The authors furthermore uncovered that music serves to regulate youth's emotions, as it provides them with opportunities to vent their negative emotions, such as anxiety and anger (Baker & Bor, 2008:287).

In addition, the authors find that the music's lyrics could play a role in the development of relationships among the youth, as they learn how to deal with certain social issues by listening to the relevant music's lyrics (Baker & Bor, 2008:287). Music also has a social function in that it aids in the development of peer relationships through the commonality of music listening (Mulder *et al.*, 2009:515).

Furthermore, music can aid in the development of a better general knowledge-base for many youngsters, as they often learn how to deal with their personal and social issues better through the relatable themes that are presented in popular music, particularly in the lyrical content (Baker & Bor, 2008:287; Mulder *et al.*, 2009:515).

Alternatively, Heavy Metal music affects people in varying ways, and these effects can be both positive and negative (Mulder *et al.*, 2009:515). The speed and intensity, as well as the extreme and seemingly aggressive lyrics, vocals and use of instruments in Heavy Metal music, have all caused concern for parents, teachers and other guardians, who fear that this music is too violent and aggressive (Mulder *et al.*, 2009:515). In addition to these concerns, further alarm has been raised as some studies have found minor connections between the preference for Heavy Metal music, and reckless behaviour and substance abuse (Mulder *et*

al., 2009:515). However, according to the literature study conducted by Mulder *et al.* (2009: 515), other international studies focusing on this topic have not found any significant evidence of such adverse influences.

What's more, the activities involved in Heavy Metal music, which often appear aggressive, cause further concern for those who do not listen to Heavy Metal music (Riches, 2011). Riches (2011) investigates some of the practices that typically accompany Heavy Metal music, which include behaviours such as repeatedly throwing their hands or fists into the air. Other behaviours include throwing the head back and forth; a phenomenon referred to as head-banging. Heavy Metal music listeners are also often witnessed turning their necks in a circular motion, causing their heads and long hair to turn in the same way, called Windmilling. On many instances during live performances, an audience group of Heavy Metal music listeners form a circle in between the rest of the crowd, usually somewhere near the front of the crowd, and proceed to run into and push each other, and this is referred to as a Moshpit. The crowd may also, usually on the request of the performers, stand on opposite ends of the venue or entertainment area and, on the performer's word, run head-on into each other; this is known as a Wall-of-death. All of these activities play an important role in listener's enjoyment of the experience of Heavy Metal music. Findings with regards to these activities are discussed in the final section of the article (Personal communication).

Concerns related to Heavy Metal music, and its seemingly aggressive nature, are equally present among parental and religious figures within the context of South Africa (Senekal, 2011:77), and it is thus important that the experiences of South Africa youth who listen to Heavy Metal music are explored.

According to international studies, such as that by Barron (2011:70), since its emergence, Heavy Metal music has been viewed in a negative light. It has been seen as harmful to the youth, causing them to rebel against society as a whole. In light of these negative views, other studies aimed to create an understanding of Heavy Metal music and its influences.

One particular study examined the influences of Heavy Metal music on youth's well-being, and whether or not this genre of music causes negative and risk behaviours such as

suicide (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:25). The study finds that Heavy Metal music's lyrics, which are often rebellious and seemingly aggressive, may cause youth to think about suicide, and in some cases it might cause youth to act upon these thoughts. None-the-less, Becknell *et al.* (2008:25) were unable to confirm that these thoughts and behaviours were directly caused by the youth listening to Heavy Metal music. Alternatively, factors such as upbringing, the state of these youth's social environments, and personality may determine this behaviour (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:25). Yet another study examined the negative influences of Heavy Metal on Dutch youth in the Netherlands (Selfhout *et al.*, 2008:445). According to the findings of this particular study, there may be a link between listening to Heavy Metal music and taking part in certain risk behaviours, such as drug consumption and suicide (Selfhout *et al.*, 2008:445). However, other factors present in these youth's lives, such as their social and personal circumstances, were found to be involved in the development of these risk behaviours (Selfhout *et al.*, 2008:449).

In contrast, some studies report positive findings with regards to the influences of Heavy Metal music. One particular study found that the loud and intense nature of Heavy Metal music provides listeners with opportunities for emotional release, which indicates that this genre of music may aid youth in coping with their emotional issues (Pieslak, 2008:38). Heavy Metal music has also been found to be a rather expressive music-type (Pieslak, 2008:38). Youth are more open to expressing themselves within the context of Heavy Metal music than within the contexts of other genres of music, and because this genre of music is expressive in nature, the youth tend to identify with it (Pieslak, 2008:38).

Heavy Metal music among South African youth

Heavy Metal music is less popular in South Africa than it is in the USA and Europe, and very few youths listen to this genre of music in South Africa (Pretorius, 2013). This is likely due to the diversity within the country; with a population of approximately 45 million people in 2014, roughly 80% of which were Black, 8% White, 3% Indians or of Asian descent, and 9% of mixed race, the South African population is certainly varied (Stats SA, 2014:2). Many of these diverse groups have equally diverse cultures that encompass their own sense of meaning and perceptions in terms of music (Schenk, 2009:3). According to Schenk (2009:3) and Walser (1995:209), in a generalised sense, Black people, Indian people and people of mixed race tend to prefer forms of music such as Hip Hop, House music, Rap,

Kwaito, Jazz, as well as different types of Gospel music and traditional music, whereas many White people, in general, prefer Pop music (both English and Afrikaans), traditional Afrikaans music (which includes the genre known as *Boere* music), Gospel music and Rock music. This leaves just a small portion of predominantly young, white South Africans who prefer to listen to Heavy Metal music (Pretorius, 2013).

Whilst most Heavy Metal music listeners are English speaking, there is also a small following among Afrikaans South Africans, and some Heavy Metal musicians even write and perform their music in Afrikaans. However, according to Senekal's (2011:96) findings, due to demographic reasons, and due to its marginalised nature, extreme metal music (which refers to subgenres such as thrash metal, death metal and black metal) never gained popularity within the Afrikaans community of South Africa. As such, many Afrikaans Heavy Metal music bands are relatively unknown (Senekal, 2011:76). Some subgenres of Heavy Metal music, such as industrial or thrash metal (which includes a fast-paced use of musical instruments particularly in the guitar-techniques), however, did gain some popularity in South Africa (Senekal, 2011:96). Punk and other forms of Rock music also gained some popularity, with the emergence of bands such as Van Coke Kartel and Fokopolisiekar (Senekal, 2011:96). Some Heavy Metal bands such as Battery 9, Insek, K.O.B.U.S, and Voice of Destruction, have become, and still remain, relatively popular within the South African Heavy Metal music 'scene', and many of these bands write and perform their music lyrics in Afrikaans (Senekal, 2011:96). The fact, though, that these bands have not gained mass popularity among Afrikaners in South Africa remains so because the Afrikaans community is a small and relatively diverse group that is made up of individuals with opposing and unique views and attitudes with regards to, among other things, their music preferences (Senekal, 2011:96).

Currently, although only a very small portion of South Africans youth listen to Heavy Metal music, there is nonetheless a relatively large number of different Heavy Metal music bands and musicians in South Africa (Pretorius, 2013). Some of these bands include the thrash metal band Agro, from Edenvale, which formed in 1971; Voice of Destruction, the Heavy Metal band from Cape Town, which formed in 1986, who write and perform their music in both English and Afrikaans; K.O.B.U.S, the Afrikaans Heavy Metal band formed by

the Voice of Destruction vocalist, Francois Breytenbach Blom, in 2000; and Mind Assault, the Heavy Metal band from Somerset West, which formed in 2003 (Pretorius, 2013).

Given this emergence of Heavy Metal music in South Africa, not to mention the following of international Heavy Metal bands among young South Africans, it would be relevant to uncover the youth's experiences related to this genre of music. This is also applicable given the general negative views of Heavy Metal music that are often espoused by conservatives and those who have no preference for Heavy Metal music in South Africa, as well as in light of the lack of evidence supporting the negative claims that have been made about this genre of music (Senekal, 2011:77). Exposure to Heavy Metal music might also have noteworthy consequences for a number of aspects of South African youth's well-being, identities, behaviours, as well as their relationships. Therefore, it would be essential to understand how South African youth experience Heavy Metal music.

Very little research has been conducted in relation to how South African youth experience Heavy Metal music. As a result, very little is known about the influences and experiences of Heavy Metal music on South African youth. In addition, most studies on the topic have been conducted by means of a quantitative methodological approach. Employing a qualitative method to explore this topic would be of value as it would enable investigation into participants' lived realities and subjective experiences from an insider perspective. Findings from such a study would shed light on the influence that Heavy Metal music has on the youth in South Africa, which is much needed considering the prevailing concerns and stereotypes surrounding this genre of music, and the absence of existing research on the topic. Also, the qualitative, subjective nature of the study could allow health care professionals as well as parents and families of the youth who listen to Heavy Metal music gain a better understanding of the experiences, and, ultimately, the effects of the music on the youth's well-being, identities, relationships, and lives in general.

In light of the previous discussion, the main aim set for the present study is to explore the experience of Heavy Metal music among South African youth who belong to the Heavy Metal music subculture. In support of this aim, the study also examines how these youth's emotions and well-being are effected by their listening to Heavy Metal music, and

specifically sought to explore the experience of Heavy Metal music in terms of South African youth's relationships.

METHODOLOGY

An exploratory qualitative design was used to gather data for the study. This design was used in order to gain an understanding of participants' personal meanings and views related to Heavy Metal music. Qualitative research is a method used to gather data in relation to people's subjective views about different phenomena (Fouche, 2004:468; Hancock *et al.*, 2009:4), and as such, is used to explore understandings of people's experiences, views, opinions, interactions, and behaviours with regards to their personal lives as well as their social contexts (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009:1).

Participants and sampling

After obtaining permission from festival organisers, a total of 26 participants were recruited at the Heavy Metal music festival, Witchfest. This festival was selected for data collection as South African youth who listen to Heavy Metal music attended the festival from all areas of the country. Non-probability sampling methods were used to obtain participants for the study. Purposive sampling was used to select participants for the study who listen to Heavy Metal music, are South African, and who are between the ages of 18 and 35. Snowball sampling was used to ensure that data saturation was reached, by asking participants to refer their friends or others (who were known to the participants and who met the sampling criteria) to the researcher (Sarantakos, 2005:163). Ages of participants ranged from 18 to 35, as this age-range qualifies as youth in South Africa (National Youth Policy of South Africa, 2009 section 11). The participants were mainly white and male, however, 7 were female, while one was black and two were of mixed-race. Participants reside in various parts of South Africa, including Sasolburg (Free State), Johannesburg, Pretoria, Vanderbijlpark (Gauteng), Cape Town, Vierlanden (Western Cape), Newcastle (KwaZulu-Natal) and Barberton (Mpumalanga). The interactions and characteristics of the sample group of Witchfest attendees are discussed in-depth in the findings section of the mini-dissertation and details for each participant are provided in the final section of the article.

Data collection

Data was obtained using semi-structured interviews, one focus group, as well as unstructured nonparticipant observation.

During semi-structured interviews the researcher directs a series of informally structured research questions to the participants selected for a particular study (Guest *et al.*, 2013:8). These questions are structured in an open-ended manner, and are formulated according to the aims of the study. Semi-structured interviews are commonly used when the qualitative method is employed in research (Guest *et al.*, 2013:8). Semi-structured interviews, with their casual, conversational style were deemed to be appropriate to the present study. Also, the open-ended nature of the research questions in semi-structured interviews allows for rich, subjective, meaningful, and ultimately, qualitative responses (Guest *et al.*, 2013:8). This is applicable to the present study seeing that participants' subjective experiences and meanings were qualitatively explored with regards to Heavy Metal music.

During a focus group a collection of research participants come together to discuss the topic under investigation (Anon, n.d:6; Sarantakos, 2005:194). Here, the researcher guides the conversations that occur during a focus group, and interferes as little as possible in the conversations that unfold during the focus group session (Sarantakos, 2005:194). Participants' social and culturally-formed feelings with regards to the topic are revealed during a focus group session (Guest *et al.*, 2013:8). Owing to the fact that the study is sociological in nature, and thus social contexts and processes are explored, the focus group session was regarded as being particularly suitable to the study.

An interview schedule was used to guide both the semi-structured interviews as well as the focus group discussion. Questions specifically focused on:

- When, how and why participants were introduced to Heavy Metal music.
- How participants experience Heavy Metal music in terms of the lyrics, the instruments, the vocals, the social context, and their personal experiences.
- How participants' relationships with family, friends, and others are affected by their listening to Heavy Metal music.
- Whether or not participants believe that the music has had a negative influence on them in terms of violence and aggression.

Unstructured, nonparticipant observation is a method of data gathering during which researchers watch a group of research participants, or the population under study, for a certain amount of time, and record everything that they see with regards to their demeanours and behaviours (McKechnie, 2013). Due to that fact that this observation is nonparticipant in nature, researchers do not make themselves or their research study known to those being observed (McKechnie, 2013). Unstructured, nonparticipant observation was used in the present study, in addition to semi-structured interviews and the focus group, in order to obtain additional information about the population whose experiences were explored. Also, the observation served to support or contradict the responses obtained from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group, should participants have been reluctant to respond openly due to personal reservations. The researcher observed the Witchfest attendees at various times during the festival, and at different locations on the festival grounds. The researcher did not make herself or the research study known to anyone during these observations, and also did not interfere in any social or personal encounters observed, given that nonparticipant observation was used.

Data analysis and interpretation

The data gathered from the interviews and focus groups were analysed using various sociological concepts and theories including the symbolic interactionist theory, and the concepts of ingroup versus outgroup, entitivity, socialisation, sub-cultures, well-being, stereotyping and labelling. The findings were also subjected to qualitative thematic content analysis as outlined in Miles *et al.* (2014:277). Qualitative content analysis is a method of analysing and interpreting research data that is commonly used in inductive, explorative qualitative research (Miles *et al.*, 2014:277). This method is applicable to the present study seeing that the study is inductive, explorative and qualitative in nature. During qualitative content analyses, the researcher evaluates the gathered data via a series of coding and categorising strategies (Miles *et al.*, 2014:277). During the present study, verbatim transcripts from the semi-structured and focus group interviews, as well as field notes derived from the observation, constituted the main sources of data. After reading through all transcripts and field notes several times to familiarise herself with the data, the researcher conducted first level coding of the data, guided by the research questions used to structure the interviews. Initial codes were then refined during a subsequent round of coding, in order to delete

redundant codes, merge related ones, and adjust code descriptions to better encapsulate fragments of text. The codes were then organised and grouped together into categories, and in some cases, overarching themes, according to their conceptual similarities. The findings that arose in the study and an interpretation of these are discussed in the Data Analysis and Discussion section which follows.

Quality assurance

Throughout the study, care was taken to adhere to criteria of trustworthiness, which include credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and triangulation (Anon, n.d:7; Shenton, 2004:63). Credibility is ensured if the phenomenon under study is accurately represented by the investigation (Shenton, 2004:63). In the present study purposive sampling was employed to ensure that only participants who fit the selection criteria of the study were recruited for the study (Shenton, 2004:63). Transferability is enabled if the research findings can be applied to the contexts of other similar studies (Shenton, 2004:63). In support of this aim, the research procedure and methodology as well as the participant sample have been described in sufficient depth to enable other researchers to make determinations as to whether or not the findings of the study would transfer to other contexts. Dependability is accomplished if the research findings remain stable over time (Anney, 2014:278). This is done by requesting participants to provide feedback on the outcomes of the study, and could also be achieved by re-confirming the study in the future (Anney, 2014:278). Confirmability is attained if the findings indicate only the participants' experiences, rather than that of the researcher (Shenton, 2004:63). This was achieved in the present study by way of member checking, whereby the researcher confirms participants' answers, and also by recording participants' responses and by making verbatim transcripts of these recordings (Shenton, 2004:63). Finally, triangulation is achieved by cross-checking the recorded data in order to strengthen the findings and by the use of different sources of information (Anon, n.d:7). Three methods of data gathering were employed in the present study in order to ensure triangulation.

Ethical considerations

Typical ethical procedures were followed in the study of South African youth' experiences of Heavy Metal music, as proposed in sources such as Strydom (2004:57). In order to complete an ethical study, the researcher first explained the study and the specific

aims to the research participants, and verified that they fully understand these. Participants were then informed that they may refuse to answer certain questions, and may stop the interview at any time (Strydom, 2004:58). They were also informed that their identities would remain confidential (Strydom, 2004:61). Participants were furthermore informed that they were free to refuse to provide their personal information (Strydom, 2004:59). Participants were also made aware of their responsibilities with regards to the study, which included answering each question truthfully, and to the best of their abilities (Code of Human Research Ethics, 2010:39). Participants were then asked if they agree to take part in the research study, if so, they were asked to provide their signed consent (see Appendix A) (Strydom, 2004:59). Participants provided their consent by signing a letter of consent, which afforded concrete proof that they were willing to take part in the study (Strydom, 2004:59). All gathered data has been stored on the researcher's personal laptop and a back-up is being kept on a memory stick at the researcher's home in a secure location. All files have been password protected to further enhance data security.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study exploring how South African youth experience Heavy Metal music will now be evaluated and described in four sections. Firstly, youth's introduction to Heavy Metal music is depicted. This section outlines when, how, and by whom youth were introduced to Heavy Metal music. Secondly, youth's experiences of Heavy Metal music are described. Thirdly, youth's relationships relative to Heavy Metal music are described. Finally, youth's views and experiences of Heavy Metal music in relation to the seemingly violent and aggressive nature of the music are revealed.

In understanding the experiences of Heavy Metal music among South African youth, it is important to understand when and how this youth was introduced to Heavy Metal music and how their interest in the music developed. The present study specifically explores when participants were introduced to Heavy Metal music, as well as how, and by whom they were introduced. Overall findings reveal that most participants were introduced to Heavy Metal music at a young age, mostly in primary school, or when entering high school. Most commonly, family members were responsible for introducing participants to this genre of music.

Findings indicate that many participants were introduced to Heavy Metal during their early adolescent years, when they had just entered secondary school. One participant stated that “... when I was 13, 14 I started actually fully listening to Metal” (Participant 3, Focus Group, 5 April 2015). Many more, however, were introduced at a very young age, when they were in primary school and even younger. One participant stated that “I first listened to Metal when I was little” (Participant 19, Interview, 5 April 2015), while another stated that she “...started listening to it at the age of about 11...” (Participant 17, Interview, 5 April 2015).

With regards to the manner in which participants were introduced to Heavy Metal music, findings show that in the majority of instances, participants first experienced Heavy Metal music via their families. These include family members such as parents, siblings, and cousins. One participant stated that his introduction to the music was “... mostly influenced by my brother” (Participant 8, Interview, 3 April 2015), while another stated that: “I was introduced to Heavy Metal through my father” (Participant 9, Interview, 4 April 2015). Many of those participants who were introduced to Heavy Metal music via family members grew up with the influence of Heavy Metal music; one participant stated that “I was brought up in the Metal scene...” (Participant 2, Focus Group, 5 April 2015). However, many more stated that they grew up in conservative and/or religious households, where Heavy Metal music was not permitted. One participant stated that “it’s been difficult since most of my family doesn’t appreciate it... they are Church-goers and they don’t like the music, especially my parents and my brother...” (Participant 1, Interview, 3 April 2015).

Participants were also, to a slightly lesser extent, introduced to Heavy Metal music by their friends, who they often had met through their common interests in the music. One participant stated that he discovered Heavy Metal music “...through a couple of friends... they gave me a few Metal albums...” (Participant 5, Interview, 3 April 2015). In a small number of instances, participants discovered the music on their own, without any influence from others. One participant stated that “I wasn’t introduced to Metal by anyone, [I found it when] I was going through [music CDs] at the mall” (Participant 11, Interview, 4 April 2015).

South African youth's experiences of Heavy Metal music

In order to understand the group of participants' experiences of Heavy Metal music and the associated community, it is important to understand the interactions of the group of Witchfest attendees; this is discussed in the following section. In addition, South African youth's experiences of Heavy Metal music are discussed in terms of participants' emotional experiences of Heavy Metal music, the coping and therapeutic effects of Heavy Metal music, youth's experiences of the music in terms of empowerment, their meaningful experiences of Heavy Metal music, their experiences of the associated social context, as well as their experiences of the various elements of the music, which includes the musical instruments and the lyrical content.

Witchfest and its attendees

From the researcher's observations at Witchfest it is clear that the sample of Witchfest attendees who took part in the study are a highly dynamic group, in that they form part of a unique sub-culture formed and maintained by the different sub-genres of Heavy Metal music. Apart from the appearance of the Witchfest attendees, which is mostly characterised by dark clothing, large bulky jewellery, dark eye make-up and dark hair, this group interacts and engages in distinctive ways. The group's interactions are mostly centred on Heavy Metal music; for example, members of this group or sub-culture often discussed their favourite bands and also spoke about those bands that they do not prefer. The groups' preference for different Heavy Metal bands is highly varied, owing to the fact that the music in itself is varied. From the researcher's observations and from the participants' comments, it is evident that there were varying 'types' of Heavy Metal music fans among the Witchfest attendees, and among South African youth who listen to Heavy Metal music in general. One participant illustrates this by stating that *"it's yet again with the elitist like, church burnings and stuff... it's those that feel that they're extremely self-righteous and only want to live in the Metal scene and everything else in this world is wrong..."* (Participant 11, Interview, 4 April 2015). With this statement, the participant illustrates the different views and lifestyles among Witchfest attendees and Heavy Metal music fans in general.

It appears that some fans completely immerse themselves in the Heavy Metal music 'scene' and this forms part of their lifestyles as well as their personal identities. These fans, for example, do not only dress in the Heavy Metal style when at festivals, but also do so in

their daily lives. Other members of this group, however, do not centre their lives on Heavy Metal music and prefer to dress and behave in the Heavy Metal 'style' only when at concerts and festivals. Participant 11 (Interview, 4 April 2015) further illustrates this by stating that when Heavy Metal fans take on the particular lifestyle associated with the music *"you're neglecting the world as it is because whether you like it or not you cannot live your entire life with your face covered in piercings if you're looking to go into the professional world, which is why, and that's gonna sound bad, some of those that have stuck to it too much end up only being stuck in wood-working, electricity and all of that because they chose to live the life too much to an extent that they couldn't go and study anything else because they just didn't care at that point of you know 'it's Metal forever' and there's nothing wrong with that, but you also need to realise that you also have a life and a future that you need to hold for your family at some day..."*

As well as enjoying South African produced Heavy Metal music, such as that by Agro and Voice of Destruction, it was observed that the interactions of the group of Witchfest attendees are also influenced by the international Heavy Metal music 'scene'. This is evident in the presence of international acts at Witchfest with performances from bands from America, Greece, Italy, and Scotland, and in the fact that some participants commented during the interviews that they enjoyed the international acts at Witchfest.

Apart from the expected influences on this group's ways of interaction, such as their up-bringing as well as their geographical locations and cultural backgrounds, it was also observed that the Witchfest attendees had a certain manner of interacting with one another. The use of profane language was highly evident, and the topics of these interactions were nearly always centred on Heavy Metal music and its associated community. Naturally, based on the fact that the group was attending a music festival, the researcher observed many attendees discussing the bands that they were looking forward to seeing most, as well as discussing the performances of the bands that they had seen throughout the weekend. This is evident in participants' responses, especially among those that participated in the focus group session. A short discussion between two participants during the focus group session depicts such an interaction, when participant 2 tells participant 3 (Focus group, 5 April) that *"like dude when I was listening to Decapitated... like yesterday, it felt like my brain was being massaged."*

At Witchfest the group was given the opportunity to act out their preferences, through their dress-style and appearance in general. They were also able to interact as they feel comfortable and speak about Heavy Metal music, as an important personal interest. This is evident in the responses of the participants. Participant 5 stated that Heavy Metal music is “...a lot more real than music that you’re gonna get on a radio station..., it’s music that was written by the people who play the music, rather than, you know, written by a committee that, that designed it for radio so that it’s gonna be popular...it’s honest...” (Interview, 3 April 2015). Participant 16 also illustrated the atmosphere at Witchfest by stating that when at a concert or festival such as Witchfest “it just takes me to another world, you feel the vibe between all these people, and when you’re in the crowd, and you head bang, you get so lost in it...” (Participant 16, Interview, 4 April 2015).

Emotion and youth’s experiences of Heavy Metal music

As part of the overall aim of the study, the influence of Heavy Metal music on South African youth’s emotions is explored. Findings, which are discussed below, reveal that, on a whole, participants experience positive emotions such as joy, excitement, and a pleasurable sense of calm when listening to Heavy Metal music. Participant 4 (Focus Group, 5 April 2015) illustrates this by stating that “there is also a lot of emotion attached to [listening to Heavy Metal music]... I got a bit emotional Friday when I realised I saw Sepultura here [at Bassline] in 2003...” While some participants stated that they feel calmed when listening to Heavy Metal music, and others stated that they feel excited, some participants revealed that they feel a sense of excitement and calmness simultaneously. One participant illustrates this by stating that “it gives [me] an adrenaline rush and it calms me down...” (Participant 1, Interview, 3 April 2015).

With regards to the calming effects of Heavy Metal music, participants stated that when they feel stressed or upset, the music relaxes them, and this makes them feel better about their troubles. Moreover, some participants also stated that they feel that they can break away from their emotional troubles and self-reflect when listening to Heavy Metal music. One participant stated that when listening to Heavy Metal music “it calms me down” (Participant 7, Interview, 3 April 2015), while another added that “I can be angry today, and I can put on Megadeth, and it will calm me down, tomorrow I’ll be happy, and I can still put

on Megadeth, the same album, and it will keep me in that mood...” (Participant 18, Interview, 5 April 2015).

Overall, participants experience Heavy Metal music in very positive ways, and many stated that the music makes them feel a sense of excitement, happiness and satisfaction. Many stated that they experience physiological responses of their enjoyment of the music such as goosebumps, chills, and raised neck hairs, and on occasion some listeners have been brought to tears, especially when experiencing their favourite Heavy Metal music bands in concert. One participant stated that when listening to Heavy Metal music it raises the “... *hairs on the back of your neck...*” (Participant 1, Focus Group, 5 April 2015), while another stated that “*I listen to a band, if I really like it I get a lot of chills down my spine... it’s very enjoyable and I just get rushes of energy that I start jumping around*” (Participant 11, Interview, 4 April 2015). Another participant stated that “*if it wasn’t for music I think I would’ve been dead already... when I’m moody, when I’m depressed, everything, my music just brings me up... Heavy Metal music sounds aggressive, but it still calms me down, it’s not like it will make you aggressive...*” (Participant 1, Interview, 3 April 2015).

Participants also indicated that they felt that the music itself expresses a lot of emotion and also expresses their emotions, or how they are feeling at a particular time. Participant 2 illustrates this by stating that “...*you can... feel through the music that somebody else feels how you feel that they would... write a song... that relates... [has] a melody, [has] that emotion, [and] express that to other people...*” (Interview, 3 April 2015). This also indicates the relatable nature of the themes of Heavy Metal music; participants feel that they are often able to relate to what is presented in many songs of Heavy Metal music. Findings therefore suggest that the music is experienced as an outlet for emotional turmoil, and consequently it has a calming effect on listeners. One participant illustrated this by stating that “*it’s mostly an outlet for me...with all that crap usually what people, that I always get and it doesn’t matter to me because I have something that I enjoy*” (Participant 9, Interview, 4 April 2015).

Participants stated that this expressive nature of Heavy Metal music serves as an emotional outlet for them, because it presents realistic ideas and occurrences in an upfront way, and because it challenges established societal systems, laws, norms, and viewpoints. The listeners also release their negative emotions through social activities such as head

banging and Moshpits, described earlier in the article, and by vocalising their feelings by singing along to the music. One participant stated that when experiencing negative emotions “...you don’t have to act upon it because the truth is people who listen to Metal music, [are] not people who necessarily want to act on it, [we’re] people who express that emotion, let it out...” (Participant 2, Interview, 3 April 2015).

Coping and the therapeutic effects of Heavy Metal music

The findings suggest that Heavy Metal music aids participants in coping on physical, emotional, and social levels. Many participants stated that they feel better about the turmoil in their lives when listening to Heavy Metal music. One participant stated that Heavy Metal music “...could really take you through some really difficult times...” (Participant 4, Interview, 3 April 2015). In addition, participant 9 stated that Heavy Metal music “always gets me through tough [times]...” (Interview, 4 April 2015). Yet another participant stated that as a listener of Heavy Metal music “you’ve got a support structure around you...” (Participant 5, Interview, 3 April 2015) in the form of the music itself, and in the form of the associated community. Some participants stated that nothing compares to how Heavy Metal music has aided them in coping. They feel that the people in their lives have not provided them with the same support that the music and associated community has. Participant 4 illustrates this by saying that “...through some of the hardest times in my life, Metal’s been there for me. Sometimes people aren’t there for you, family’s not there for you, but the music is always there for you...” (Interview, 3 April 2015).

Interestingly, when listening to Heavy Metal music while they are alone, participants stated that they are given an opportunity for inner thought, and to work through their personal issues. This is illustrated by participant 4 (quoted previously), who stated that one can derive a lot from listening to the music in terms of coping with hardships, and that the music is seen as a form of support (Interview, 3 April 2015).

Empowerment and youth’s experiences of Heavy Metal music

Findings indicate that some participants feel empowered and stronger when listening to Heavy Metal music. They stated that the music makes them feel powerful, brave and motivated to take on life and its challenges. One participant revealed that “I feel empowered when I listen to Metal...” (Participant 9, Interview, 4 April 2015). Many participants

specifically stated that the music often pushes them to rise above their troubles and to better themselves. To demonstrate this, one participant stated that *“the power and the magic that [the] music has... [makes you] feel healed or stronger”* (Participant 20, Interview, 5 April 2015).

Meaning and youth’s experiences of Heavy Metal music

Some participants revealed that the themes presented in the lyrics of Heavy Metal music are very meaningful to them. This meaning, participants state, is often found in the lyrics which were viewed as dealing with real-life issues to which they can personally relate. This is also often revealed in the lyrics, which deal with issues that are closely related to the concerns that the youth have to deal with, such as parental divorce, peer pressure, and feeling that they do not belong. Participant 2 illustrates this to some extent by stating that as Heavy Metal music listeners *“we’re not alone, we know that there [are] other people that feel the way that we do...”* (Interview, 3 April 2015). Additionally, participant 15 also illustrates the meaningful nature of Heavy Metal music by stating that *“as jy sad is, of jy’s lonely, of jy soek vriende, of jy is kwaad vir Government...jy sal ‘n meaning uit dit uit kry...”* (Interview, 4 April 2015).

Social context and youth’s experiences of Heavy Metal music

Participants also shared their experiences of the social context, or associated community, of Heavy Metal music. A unique community of Heavy Metal music listeners has developed since the music’s emergence, and findings of the present study provide support for this contention. Under the following section several themes related to youth’s experiences of the social context of Heavy Metal music in South Africa are discussed. These themes include the close fellowship that has developed among Heavy Metal music listeners in South Africa, the accepting nature of Heavy Metal music listeners, and the sense of belonging that Heavy Metal music listeners experience when among fellow listeners. How the different genders and races are treated within the social context of Heavy Metal music is also discussed in this section, as well as youth’s experiences of live performances when they attend festivals and live concerts.

Fellowship and youth's experiences of the social context of Heavy Metal music

Youth's experiences of the social context of Heavy Metal music are also explored with regards to the unique sense of camaraderie occurring among listeners. Findings indicate that within the social context of Heavy Metal music, many uniquely close and tight-knit social connections have developed. Many participants stated that they experience a brotherhood or sense of fellowship when among Heavy Metal community members. In the words of Participant 12 "*there's an unwritten language between Metal-heads... a bond, if you will*" (Interview, 4 April 2015).

Many participants also stated that they have met numerous good-natured people through the music, many of whom they formed close friendships with. One participant illustrated the good nature of Heavy Metal music listeners by stating that "*Metal-heads, from my experience are just the sweetest, softest, most caring people*" (Participant 4, Interview, 3 April 2015). Another participant pointed out that some of his "*...best experiences [related to Heavy Metal music, and the associated social context] would be... the friends that I've made...*" (Participant 5, Interview, 3 April 2015). Also, due to these oft-reported, good-natured attitudes of many Heavy Metal music listeners and musicians, many participants stated that they have learned how to be better people, and how to be more accommodating and accepting of others. One participant stated that the Heavy Metal music community is "*...one of the places where you don't get judged, doesn't matter who you are, what you look like, what you listen to...*" (Participant 2, Interview, 3 April 2015).

Acceptance, belonging and youth's experiences of the social context of Heavy Metal music

In this sub-section, youth's experiences of Heavy Metal music, and the associated social context, are explored in relation to the accepting nature of listeners, and the sense of belonging that often develops among Heavy Metal music listeners. Findings indicate that participants feel that they belong within the Heavy Metal music community and that they have found a place where they fit in above all other communities.

Many participants stated that for a large portion of their lives they felt alone, and that the Heavy Metal music community has provided them with the social support system that they need. This is not only experienced in the act of listening to the music itself, but also is revealed in the characteristics of the community members; in their caring and accepting

nature. As one participant stated “...everyone goes through hard times and I think, the thing with Metal is you can listen to a song, and... you can relate in some way... you’ve gone through some kind of pain or heartbreak or rejection or isolation and I think it helps you to get through those times because you know you’re not alone...” (Participant 4, Interview, 3 April 2015). Yet another participant stated that: “just the whole culture, as a whole... you feel more like you belong, than in any other subculture that I’ve experienced before” (Participant 14, Interview, 4 April 2015). This is further illustrated by participant 2 “...but you find the music that... doesn’t fit in with the general populace, which is how you feel at the time, that’s an important part of being a Metal-head because you realise that you don’t fit in and... most of society will have you think there’s something wrong with that and then we find music that speaks to us...” (Interview, 3 April 2015).

Festivals and concerts and youth’s experiences of the social context of Heavy Metal music

Seeing musicians live seems to be important in the experience of Heavy Metal music. This is because at these live performances youth experience the music in a tangible way and can take part in social activities and behaviours such as Moshpits. Youth’s experiences of Heavy Metal music festivals and live concerts are now described.

Many participants stated that they experience live performances as personally meaningful due to the relatable themes of the music, described earlier in this section. Participants also experience these performances as emotionally fulfilling. They reported often feeling intensely happy when seeing their favourite Heavy Metal musicians live. One participant illustrated this by stating that “...my best [experience of Heavy Metal music] was [seeing] Metallica... and that actually [brought me to] tears, because [listening to the band’s music] helped me...[through]... divorce” (Participant 2, Focus Group, 5 April 2015). Another participant shared their experience of seeing musicians live at Witchfest; “Cannibal Corpse last night, changed my life...” (Participant 1, Focus Group, 5 April 2015). Some participants explained that they experience a strong sense of belonging and acceptance, referred to earlier in the article, while attending Heavy Metal music festivals and concerts. Some participants also stated that they find the experience of attending Heavy Metal music festivals and concerts exciting and exhilarating. Participant 5 illustrated all of this by indicating that his best experiences of Heavy Metal music occurred “every time [he went] to a... festival...” he

also added that *“it’s awesome, it’s just like... a communion... [you]...get this other worldly experience, there’s nothing like live music...”* (Focus Group, 5 April 2015).

Drugs and alcohol were stated as constituting an integral part of Heavy Metal music festivals and concerts. One participant stated that when at a Heavy Metal music festival such as Witchfest *“your entire festival... there’s drink and there’s drugs and there’s all sorts”* (Participant 1, Focus Group, 5 April 2015). In this regard, participants suggested that the drugs and alcohol are present because they further enhance their experiences of the music and the ‘vibe’ at these festivals and concerts. They also stressed, however, that there was no need for these enhancers, but that this is part of any music festival, concert or social context where youngsters gather. Participant 11 stated that *“drinking and partying a lot is a big part of the Metal scene ...”* (Interview, 4 April 2015). This is discussed further at the end of the findings section of the mini-dissertation.

Appearance and youth’s experiences of the social context of Heavy Metal music

The researcher also explored and observed the appearance of youth who listen to Heavy Metal music, and how these appearances influence youth’s experiences of Heavy Metal music. Findings reveal that participants mainly value the dress style associated with Heavy Metal music as it provides them with an opportunity to express themselves through their physical appearance.

The researcher observed the unique dress style and appearances of youth who listen to Heavy Metal music at Witchfest. This youth generally wore black clothing, dark eye make-up, had multiple tattoos and piercings, and they often wore accessories such as heavy belts and chains, as well as large, black lace-up shoes. Many also had dyed their hair black or red, and many attendees, both male and female, had long hair.

According to participants’ reports, many youngsters who listen to Heavy Metal music feel that they are given an opportunity to express their inner selves through their appearance. One participant stated that *“...I like the way [Heavy Metal music listeners] dress and [the] hairstyles... and tattoos and dark make up... it’s my style”* (Participant 19, Interview, 5 April 2015). Participant 3 further illustrates this by stating that Heavy Metal music *“gives me a sense of freedom, I can be who I am...I love the culture, I love the style, the way the people*

look, I love tattoos, piercings, those kind of things, long hair is my thing as well, so it's just, I feel it's where I fit in...I feel comfortable and at home..." (Interview, 3 April 2015).

Furthermore, the black clothing, dark make-up, long beards and long, dark hair, the tattoos, the anti-religious accessories, such as pentagrams, and portrayals of death, such as animal skulls, that the researcher witnessed at Witchfest all function as a form of rebellion and serve to shock those outside of the Heavy Metal music community. Participant 12 illustrated this by stating that Heavy Metal music "*it's just there to piss people off sometimes I think... it's like see who, who can offend the most people*" (Interview, 4 April 2015).

Instruments and youth's experiences of Heavy Metal music

Youth's experiences of each separate element of Heavy Metal music is also explored in the present study. This includes an investigation, amongst others, of their experiences of the instrumental aspects of this genre of music (as opposed to the lyrical and vocal content thereof). Virtually all participants stated that the instruments play a vital role in their experience and enjoyment of Heavy Metal music, and most particularly cited electric guitars, bass guitars, and drums as the instruments that they noticed most. In addition to specifically enjoying the sounds produced by these instruments, participants also noted that they elicit both a calming and an exciting effect when listened to.

A large number of participants stated that they enjoy listening to the individual instruments when experiencing Heavy Metal music. Guitars, many participants stated, excite them due to the fast-paced nature of many of the guitar riffs. One such participant stated: "*...it just gives that feeling of being alive, especially guitars...*" (Participant 2, Interview, 3 April 2015).

On the other hand, some participants stated that the guitars have a "*...calming effect...*" (Participant 1, Interview, 3 April 2015) on them when their negative emotions are heightened. Drums and bass guitars were also noted as imperative to the music and some participants noted that they experience these as exciting and evocative of strong emotions. In relation to this one participant stated that "*...the bassist will have one riff that blows my mind or the drummer will have one beat that shakes my soul...*" (Participant 18, Interview, 5 April 2015). Other findings indicate that listeners enjoy the experience of listening to all the

instruments as a whole. Participant 20 stated: *“I never really looked at the lyrics, I didn’t like specific songs, but it’s just like a whole”* (Interview, 5 April 2015).

Some participants also revealed that they enjoy the experience of listening to Heavy Metal music due to the advanced talent of the musicians. One participant illustrated this: *“if you go to the instrument side, and you listen to [bands] like Apocalyptica... I think it’s a talent...”* (Participant 20, Interview, 5 April 2015).

Lyrical content and youth’s experiences of Heavy Metal music

Youth’s experiences of Heavy Metal music lyrics, that is, the written words that are sung by the vocalist, as well as the manner in which these lyrics are conveyed through the vocal techniques, are also explored in the present study. A great number of participants revealed that they enjoy the experience of Heavy Metal music mainly owing to the personally relevant and intense lyrics of the music.

Participants stated that, due to the fact that many musicians share their personal experiences in the written content of their music, they feel that they can often relate to Heavy Metal music lyrics. One such participant stated that *“...some lyrics are more personal and deep”* (Participant 7, Interview, 3 April 2015). While another participant added that *“...you can relate [to Heavy Metal music lyrics] in [terms of] life experiences...”* (Participant 3, Interview, 3 April 2015).

The rebellion often presented in the content of Heavy Metal music lyrics, participants state, further enhances their experiences of the music because they often identify with the sense of being at odds with established norms and rules in society and culture. One participant illustrated this by stating that *“...the words... make sense, you understand it and... [it reflects] the way you see the world...”* (Participant 3, Interview, 3 April 2015).

Furthermore, due to the nature of Heavy Metal music lyrics, which often deal with important historical, political and social issues, some participants stated that the music tends to cause listeners to question virtually everything in their own lives. One participant made this point when he stated that *“it makes you question everything around you and forces you to*

go search for the answers yourself often finding out stuff that you never would have before” (Participant 14, Interview, 4 April 2015).

Many participants stated that they felt fulfilled by their experiences of Heavy Metal music lyrics, because the lyrics create a good ‘vibe’ and atmosphere for the music altogether. This, some participants stated, comes from the authenticity, heart, and soul that is perceived to be in the lyrical content. One participant stated that with regards to “...*the lyrics, even though people think they just scream and shout like hooligans, the lyrics actually do mean something, if you go and read up about the lyrics, when you look at the deeper meaning of the song it’s got so much more to it*” the same participant later also noted that “...*if you read the past that these people actually have, they actually sing about personal life experiences*” (Participant 17, Interview, 5 April 2015).

The present study also explores youth’s experiences of the vocal techniques employed in Heavy Metal music. Some findings suggest that participants experience the vocal techniques, such as growling (deep, low vocal techniques) and screeching (high-pitched, eerie vocal techniques) as satisfying and exciting. One participant stated that she enjoys “*the voice how they sing it... how they growl it...*” (Participant 19, Interview, 5 April 2015).

Some participants also stated that they enjoy the experience of listening to the vocals due to the complicated, well-practiced, and sometimes classical nature of the vocal techniques. One participant illustrated this by stating that “*Bruce Dickenson... Iron Maiden’s vocalist... he was used as an example by classical music teachers on how to perform lyrically... his style, his delivery...the power behind his voice... is comparable with... high-end Opera singers, he is ridiculously good at what he does...*” (Participant 5, Interview, 3 April 2015).

Youth’s relationships and the experience of Heavy Metal music

Youth’s relationships with those who do not listen to Heavy metal music, their families, and friends are also explored in relation to the youth’s experience of the music. These and similar themes are outlined in the following sections.

Relationships with those who do not listen to Heavy Metal music

In this section, youth's relationships with those who do not listen to Heavy Metal music is considered. While a very small number of participants felt that their preference for Heavy Metal music did not have any influence on any of their relationships, the overwhelming majority indicated that their relationships were indeed affected by this choice.

Some findings showed that participants believed that their preference for Heavy Metal music has not affected their relationships, and this, they stated, was despite their families' and friends' acceptance of their preference for Heavy Metal music. One participant illustrated this by stating that Heavy Metal music "*doesn't really affect*" (Participant 10, Interview, 4 April 2015) their familial relationships or friendships despite their loved ones' reaction to and acceptance of the music.

Most participants, however, stated that their relationships are affected by their choice in music, and they revealed that they struggle with forming or upholding relationships with those outside of the context of Heavy Metal music. Those outside of the Heavy Metal music community are often strangers, school friends, romantic partners, and work colleagues, and many of these individuals do not understand or accept participant's choice in listening to Heavy Metal music. This is demonstrated by one participant's comments that "*relationship-wise... I do have some issues because it's difficult to find people that like [Heavy Metal music] where I live...*" (Participant 3, Interview, 3 April 2015). Many participants stated that they have experienced a lot of difficulty in their lives related to how those outside of the Heavy Metal music 'scene' judge and stigmatise them. One participant demonstrated this by stating that "*...the negative experiences I've had, have mostly been of schools [and] religious groups, where they basically try and stop you from listening to the music... stop you from wearing any clothing that represents Metal because that's 'evil'... schools have gone as far as to put [me] in detention, I've been expelled...*" (Participant 4, Interview, 3 April 2015). Yet another participant stated that "*it's just you are out casted because of a social construction or stereotype that it has gained over the years... so you actually end up being cast out and neglected by a large portion of society and especially for, I think, if I can speak for a lot of people when we first started listening to Metal a lot of people's parents gave them a lot trouble about it because it was apparently Satanic and evil, but as they grew up a lot of their parents were like 'you know what these aren't actually bad people' it's more of the*

social construction about it, but still in society it's very difficult to live the Metal life because of how it's deemed to be..." (Participant 11, Interview, 4 April 2015).

Relationships with family

Youth's experiences of Heavy Metal music, as it is related to their relationships with their families, are explored in this section. Many participants stated that they have a closer connection to family members who also listen to Heavy Metal music than to those who do not. Other participants, whose families do not listen to Heavy Metal music, stated that their families tend to treat them critically and do not accept their preference for the music. Some participants, however, revealed that their families accept their preferences, regardless of whether they listen to the music themselves. These findings are now discussed extensively.

Participants whose families also listen to Heavy Metal music stated that their families understand and agree with their preference for the music. Family members who participants indicated as being the most accepting include parents, parental figures, siblings, and cousins who introduced the participants to the music. One participant noted that Heavy Metal music has positively affected his relationship with his family because *"my father listens to rock [and] if I play [Heavy Metal music to him], he will happily listen to it. My brother [also appreciates the music] and my family [is]... more than happy for me, [and] they don't judge me..."* (Participant 3, Interview, 3 April 2015).

Nevertheless, other participants stated that they experience difficulty with their families who do not listen to Heavy Metal music, due to their family's inability to accept their preference for this genre of music. Participants stated that their families do not appear to have an interest in understanding their enjoyment of Heavy Metal music. The participants noted that it was their parents, who often come from religious backgrounds, who held the most negative evaluations related to their preferences for Heavy Metal music. Participant 18 illustrates this by noting that *"[my parents have] tried to hit me with the Bible every single day for more than 15 years [in an effort to prevent me from listening to Heavy Metal music]"* (Interview, 5 April 2015). This opposition of their views tends to cause a lot of familial turmoil because some of the participants' families tend to be rather forceful in their efforts to stop the participant listening to Heavy Metal music. One participant stated that *"with my family [the relationship is]... not great...my mom hated [Heavy Metal music] from [the] start,*

[and] she has broken countless of my CD's, she's burned flags of mine, she's burned up t-shirts that I had, and... we still fight about it" (Participant 14, Interview, 4 April 2014).

Some participants stated that they have taught their religious families to be more accepting of their preferences by listening to genres of Heavy Metal music that their families would find more suitable, such as listening to Christian Metal within a Christian home. This, they stated, somewhat improved their family's acceptance and understanding of the music. One participant who comes from a highly religious family stated that he taught his family to accept Heavy Metal music more by listening to Christian Metal music in their presence, the participant stated that *"that has definitely changed some of [my family's] points of view [related to] Metal because I used the bands to show them that if you are in a Metal band it doesn't mean you are an aggressive or anti-religious person"* (Participant 8, Interview, 3 April 2015).

Relationships with friends

Exploring friendships of youth who listen to Heavy Metal music revealed a dual pattern in which highly positive and supportive relationships existed with friends who also listened to Heavy Metal music, but strained or even broken friendships tended to occur with those friends who did not do so.

Participants were virtually unanimous in stating that their friendships with others who also listen to Heavy Metal music were positive, supportive and often close. Typically, participants met these friends via their involvement in this genre of music, usually while attending festivals. This is clearly expressed by one participant who stated that *"I met most of my friends at various festivals..."* (Participant 6, Interview, 3 April 2015). Participants often mentioned that the strong, familial-type bond that exists between listeners of Heavy Metal music made it easy to form such friendships. This is echoed by the words of a participant who stated that within the Heavy Metal music scene, one *"[finds] people that think like you do... [and] that actually care..."* (Participant 2, Interview, 3 April 2015). Furthermore, it is evident that Heavy Metal music aids listeners with their social anxieties. This is indicated in the responses of participant 3 who states that Heavy Metal music has *"changed me a lot...I used to be an extreme introvert, you would not see me at a crowd, you would not see me talking to people, it opened a whole new World for me, made me feel comfortable to be*

myself, so I don't need to be hiding in the shadows or staying away from people, I can just go anywhere and talk to anybody really.... It's given me a freedom I've never known before, it helped me to meet amazing people, very intelligent people [who] you can have endless conversations with. It helps you socially a lot..." (Interview, 3 April 2015).

However, in stark contrast to this, a large number of participants revealed that they have very often lost friendships which existed prior to their interest in Heavy Metal music. In the words of one participant: *"I [have] lost a lot of friends... a lot of friends..."* since listening to Heavy Metal music (Participant 16, Interview, 4 April 2015). Typically such friends did not accept or approve of the participants' musical interests, and often overtly or covertly expressed judgement and criticism towards participants, which caused either significant strain, or the ending of the relationship. This was not always the case however, as a few participants mentioned that they were able to retain such friendships in those cases where such friends accepted the participants' love of Heavy Metal music, even though they themselves did not like it. As one participant stated: *"...I have a lot of friends who don't listen to Metal at all and lot that do and it's very cool... they all mix together..."* (Participant 10, Interview, 4 April 2015).

Violence and aggression and the experience of Heavy Metal music

Youth's experiences of Heavy Metal music are also explored with regards to the seemingly aggressive and violent nature of the music. Many participants disagreed with the contention that Heavy Metal music directly causes or leads to aggression and violent behaviour. Moreover, a large number of participants stated that the music, far from eliciting aggression, had a calming effect on them.

The findings suggest that most participants disagree that the music causes violent or dangerous behaviour. As one participant stated: *"I don't think it causes violence at all, whatsoever... [because Heavy Metal music communities] generally aren't really angry"* (Participant 10, Interview, 4 April 2015). Many participants stated that, in their opinion, those who do display violent behaviour when listening to Heavy Metal music do so due to their possessing violent or aggressive tendencies prior to their listening to the music. Participants also stated that they believe that violence is part of certain individuals' inborn nature. One participant illustrated this by stating that: *"...violence is related to anything... we've*

committed violence in the name of God, in the name of revenge, in the name of pure personal rage... so blaming music, an art form, for violence is kind of ludicrous..." (Participant 7, Interview, 3 April 2015). Participants also stated that they believe that people who display tendencies for violence are sometimes drawn to Heavy Metal music as an outlet. This, participants stated, also aids them to better cope with their issues, rather than the music causing or exacerbating their violence.

Many participants also noted that certain activities that they participate in during Heavy Metal music festivals and live concerts that may appear rather violent, are not in fact so. These include head-banging, taking part in Moshpits, and Windmilling. These activities, although appearing violent, were actually believed to serve as an outlet for intense feelings for these individuals. What's more, participants state that these behaviours enhance the expressive nature of Heavy Metal music. Also, participants believe that these activities deepen the bond between listeners of Heavy Metal music. One participant added that *"it just looks [violent] when you're in a Moshpit, everybody is Moshing and pushing each other around and that's where we take our violence out..."* (Participant 1, Interview, 3 April 2015). The researcher witnessed one individual bumping hard into another during a Moshpit at Witchfest, and the individual promptly apologised. In the same vein, the researcher also witnessed one individual falling hard during a Moshpit and three other individuals immediately ran to the individual's aid; this appears suggestive of a caring, rather than an innately hostile attitude among at least some Heavy Metal music listeners.

Drugs, alcohol, and youths' experiences of Heavy Metal music

The use and abuse of drugs and alcohol is a re-occurring theme at Heavy Metal music festivals such as Witchfest. The effects of this, as a possible negative outcome of listening to Heavy metal music and attending festivals such as Witchfest, need to be explored in order to illustrate whether listening to Heavy Metal music is harmful or not. The remainder of this section is devoted to a discussion of this theme.

From the researcher's observations, drugs and alcohol are clearly present among youths at Heavy Metal music festivals such as Witchfest. Participants noted the presence of drugs and alcohol and how they experienced these; in the words of participant 16: *"like Alestorm, you know the genres, you have to experience them that way, they're a drinking*

band, you get so excited you don't even need the drugs, but you get drunk with them... the best part is you head-banging with someone and... even when you don't know the song you feel like you're living that, you know... ah, and it makes you wanna cry cause it's so amazing..." (Interview, 4 April 2015).

Based on the researcher's observations, it appears that the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol often occurs at festivals such as Witchfest and sometimes festival attendees continue to use and abuse drugs and alcohol, even when not at festivals or concerts. This is potentially problematic as the abuse of drugs and alcohol can lead to serious emotional and psychological harm as well as physical ailments such as liver disease (Crowe, 1998). One participant illustrates this by stating that *"some people can't deal with all that pressure at that young age and they do end up going to drinking and partying a lot. It is a big part of the Metal scene, the drinking, the partying, and everything... some people unfortunately remain too attached to that in their rebellious years and it ends up bad...you end up enveloped in this scene..."* (Participant 11, Interview, 4 April 2015).

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to explore how South African youth experience Heavy Metal music. Using a qualitative approach, data from semi-structured interviews and a focus group conducted with a total of 26 participants were analysed by means of thematic content analysis. The findings are interpreted from a sociological perspective.

Findings reveal that youth are often introduced to Heavy Metal music during their late childhood years and early adolescence. In addition, youth are frequently introduced to Heavy Metal music via family members such as their parents and older siblings, as well as friends who listen to Heavy Metal music themselves. This is sociologically significant because according to sources on social development, at a young age, people tend to learn and take over many of their behaviours, which are considered norms of behaviour within a given society, from their direct families (Ferrante, 2008:86). According to the sociological concept of socialisation, youngsters learn how to behave and function within their social worlds through social interaction and observation, where they interact with and observe those within their social contexts and model what they learn (Ferrante, 2008:86). This process is facilitated by socialising agents, who are the people who convey to young people, through social

interaction, the commonly held social views applicable to a given society (Ferrante, 2008:86). The findings of the present study suggest that family members (especially parents and older siblings) and friends constitute the primary agents who exert a socializing influence on youth in terms of inducting them into the sphere of Heavy Metal music. This process appears to occur mostly through a process of modeling and imitation, where the children of those who listen to Heavy Metal music imitate their parents' preferences for the music and, in turn, take on similar listening behaviours.

The findings of this study also suggest that a strong sense of unity and cohesion exist amongst listeners of Heavy Metal music. It appears that the strength of this cohesion is to a great extent fuelled by an ingroup versus outgroup dynamic, in which the marked juxtaposition of the nature of Heavy Metal music, along with the unconventional style of clothing and appearance that are common among fans, with non-listeners of Heavy Metal music creates a highly polarised 'us versus them' experience. Participants frequently noted that they felt like outsiders even before their interest in Heavy Metal music developed, and that they found an alternative and preferable identity in the Heavy Metal community. However, as is typical in ingroup versus outgroup dynamics, participants often indicated that they felt judged, stereotyped and not accepted by those belonging to the outgroup (Forsyth, 2010:420). The sociological concept of labelling is applicable here. Often individuals label, and evaluate or judge, others according to their behaviours and preferences (Ferrante, 2008:133). Participants who were interviewed for the present study stated that this often had detrimental effects on their personal relationships, and often caused estrangement from family members and loss of friendships. Typically, participants stated that their families generally lack acceptance and understanding with regards to their preference for Heavy Metal music. These evaluations of Heavy Metal music are likely to be worse in a country like South Africa, where a large portion of the populace are conservative and religious (De Waal, 2015), and thus likely to reject Heavy Metal music and its listeners. Furthermore, as is common among South African youth (Pinnock, n.d), this youth felt that they did not receive the support that they needed from their families or close loved ones (Pinnock, n.d). This clearly illustrates the negative influence that listening to Heavy Metal music can have on youth, as this is likely to lead to their alienation from social groups that do not listen to Heavy Metal music. However, while a common outcome of such a situation is for many youths to turn to drugs and/or alcohol, or to join gangs in order cope with their turmoil, and to seek the social

support that they are not receiving at home (Pinnock, n.d; Shabangu, n.d:8), youth who listen to Heavy Metal music, on the other hand, tend to turn to the music and the Heavy Metal community in order to obtain this support. This suggests that the sphere of Heavy Metal music likely plays an important role in constructively supporting the well-being of youth who otherwise feel unsupported.

This finding is also significant to the field of medical sociology. Well-being, which is defined as a complete state of wellness or good health, is a central concept studied by medical sociologists (Cockerham, 2003:3). It is a holistic concept, meaning that it refers to all areas of an individual's functioning, including their social, emotional, physical and spiritual functioning (Cockerham, 2003:3). The fact that Heavy Metal music acts as a coping mechanism and provides listeners with a social support system, suggests that the music might play an important role in the well-being of at least some youth. This is significant because it contradicts negative views and stereotypes of this genre of music (Mulder, et al, 2009:515; Becknell, *et al.*, 2008:24; Selfhout, et al, 2008:435), such as its potential to cause suicidal behaviour, which are held by non-listeners of Heavy Metal music. However, of concern are the possible deleterious effects that stereotypes and judgements from individuals outside of this community might have on youth who listen to Heavy Metal music. Given that negative judgements of outgroups are often maintained by lack of knowledge and understanding about such a given group (Forsyth, 2010:420), it is hoped that the findings of the present study would make some contribution to challenge some of the stereotypes which might exacerbate the polarization between Heavy Metal music fans and those members of society who do not listen to this genre of music. Furthermore, the fact that several participants stated that drugs and alcohol are commonly used during Heavy Metal music festivals represents a counterpoint to the generally positive findings noted earlier, in that these behaviours might adversely affect the physical and emotional well-being of youth. The nature, frequency, extent, and outcomes of drug and alcohol use among youth listening to Heavy Metal music were however not explored in-depth in the present study as it did not form part of the central aims that guided the study. As such, future research is required to investigate this specific dimension of the Heavy Metal music subculture.

Contrary to stereotypical views of Heavy Metal music as prompting aggressive and destructive behaviour amongst listeners (Moberg, 2012:113), the vast majority of participants

felt emphatically that this was not the case. Most believed that individuals who listen to this genre of music and display aggression possessed this trait before they started listening to Heavy Metal music, and might simply have been attracted to it due to the rebellious themes that are typically expressed in this form of music. This contention is supported by studies of the development of aggression which tend to concur that aggression is an inherent characteristic with which individuals are born (Smith, 2008). Moreover, a dominant theme that appeared in the interviews, focus groups, and observational data was that Heavy Metal music fans were considered to be kind, good-natured and accepting (rather than aggressive), which is often what drew participants to this genre in the first place. Other findings revealed that participants believed that Heavy Metal music enabled them to release (rather than destructively express) repressed feelings in constructive and relatively non-violent ways. That is, rather than encouraging increased levels of aggression, participants believed that the music helped them manage, channel, and thus lower any anger or aggression that they might be feeling. Seemingly aggressive acts that did occur during Witchfest, such as Moshpits and the Wall-of-death, appeared to represent well-regulated and ritualised mechanisms for expressing intense feelings, and even these events were often typified by caring and supportive, rather than aggressive, behaviours among fans. As such, the findings of the study not only challenge stereotypical notions of Heavy Metal music as inciting aggressive behaviour, but also suggest that it might provide a constructive outlet for processing strong emotions such as anger and aggression in non-destructive ways. Specifically, it appears that Heavy Metal music makes this possible via the lyrics of the music, which often deal with challenging issues, along with the intense instrumental components of the music, the ritualised activities such as Moshpits, and the sense of support, belonging and camaraderie that typify the Heavy Metal music sphere. This contention finds support in existing literature. In their study on the functions of music, Brown and Jellison (2012:335) found that music could be very useful in helping youngsters cope with an array of social and personal issues. These, for example, include social issues such as unrest in the family, problems among friends, or turmoil within communities, and, on a personal level, it was even found that music can help youth cope with certain physical disabilities (Brown & Jellison, 2012:335).

Pieslak (2008:38) studied the effects of Heavy Metal music in terms of self-expression and identity development. Owing to the fact that Heavy Metal music is an intense genre of music, to which youth can often relate, it frequently supports youth' expressiveness,

and ultimately aids in their identity development (Pieslak, 2008:38). What's more, youth also report experiencing a sense of calm after listening to Heavy Metal music. This is relevant to existing literature as a recent study by Sharman and Dingle (2015) similarly revealed that youth tend to feel calmed, rather than aggravated, after listening to Heavy Metal music. It is of significance to understand and be aware of the positive, calming effects of Heavy Metal music because this determinedly contradicts negative commonly held views of non-listeners of Heavy Metal music and its effects.

In his study of Heavy Metal music in South Africa, Senekal (2011:76) found that the themes of normlessness within "Afrikaans and international extreme metal [do] not involve merely the rejection of dominant norms, but also involve the creation of alternative norms, which in turn leads to social cohesion". This, Senekal (2011:76) stated, is in accordance with sociological inquiry because the joint (or social) creation of new norms within a social system is a regular and expected process in the formation of social unity. The findings in the present study corroborate these notions, as findings suggest that youth reject certain dominant norms, such as societal norms of dress, and that they create alternative norms such as their courteous, caring behaviours towards other Heavy Metal music listeners, and their unconventional norms of dress. The findings of this study suggest that such shared norms do indeed result in an enhanced sense of social cohesion among the youth.

The similarity of dress and physical appearance among 'Metalheads' also result in a high degree of entativity. This concept refers to the apparent cohesiveness or unity of a group of people, and is determined, amongst other things, by similarities of dress and manner (Forsyth, 2010:14). These high levels of entativity likely contribute not only to the pronounced sense of belonging to an ingroup among Heavy Metal music fans, but also likely enhance their polarization with those outside of this group, as their unconventional dress and mannerisms set them conspicuously apart from others. Taken together, these findings strongly suggest that a unique sub-culture (Ferrante, 2008:58) has developed among South African youth who listen to Heavy Metal music. The notion that Heavy Metal music can represent a sub-culture, is supported by the study by Senekal (2011:96), who identified Heavy Metal music as a sub-culture, due to the unique social interactions occurring between listeners, and owing to the fact that the group has developed distinctive norms such as their appearance, taking part in Moshpits, and the like. Each society has its own unique values,

norms and beliefs (Ferrante, 2008:58). Norms reflect the rules of a particular culture, and thus dictate how people should behave within that said culture (Ferrante, 2008:58). Owing to fact that the themes within Heavy Metal music often rebel against commonly held societal norms, and due to the fact that non-listeners of Heavy Metal music tend to shun listeners of this genre of music, it is of significance to listeners and society as a whole to understand the effects of this music, and to recognise the norms that ultimately develop within its associated community.

CONCLUSION

Based on an extensive study of literature and previous research, it appears that there is a lack of research on youth's experiences of Heavy Metal music within the context of South Africa. In order to address this gap, the present study on the experiences of Heavy Metal music was conducted among 26 South African participants between the ages of 18 and 35. Data was gathered at the popular Heavy Metal music festival Witchfest, using individual semi-structured interviews, one focus group session, as well as unstructured nonparticipant observation. Data was analysed using thematic content analysis.

The themes derived from the data indicate that Heavy Metal music is experienced in mostly positive ways by participants. However, a number of negative experiences were found to co-occur with these predominantly positive influences.

As far as positive experiences are concerned, findings revealed that Heavy Metal music, due to its intense nature, serves as an outlet for many youths' personal and social frustrations and concerns. This is often experienced as therapeutic by this youth, and this also acts as a coping mechanism, aiding youth in dealing with their personal and social troubles.

In a social sense, Heavy Metal music often provides youth with a positive support system. Youth report that the social context, and others who listen to Heavy Metal music, are mostly caring and friendly, and most participants reported experiencing a deep sense of belonging when among other Heavy Metal music listeners. Furthermore, youth reported the development of a fellowship and a close bond between Heavy Metal music listeners. This, in turn, demonstrates the development of a unique sub-culture among South African youth who listen to Heavy Metal music.

What's more, findings of the present study also indicate that, on a personal level, youth tend to experience Heavy Metal music as satisfying and exciting, and, at the same time, calming.

In terms of the instruments, lyrical content, and vocal techniques employed in Heavy Metal music youth yet again report the therapeutic outcomes of listening to Heavy Metal music due to the intense and loud nature of the music overall. Participants stated that singing along with the lyrics and vocals serves as an important outlet for them, as they are able to let go of their troubles by listening to the music.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Heavy Metal music plays a significant, and mostly positive, role in youth's well-being. However, a number of factors were also found to detract from participants' well-being. While no participant explicitly indicated that this is a problem, the use of drugs and alcohol, at least during Heavy Metal concerts, raise some concerns about possible adverse influences associated with the Heavy Metal music sub-culture. Furthermore, as far as these youth's relationships are concerned, most participants reported experiencing negative evaluations from those who do not listen to Heavy Metal music. A great number of youth stated that those outside of the Heavy Metal music 'scene' tend to judge them harshly related to their preferences for the music. This is relevant to the sociological concept of labelling as those outside of the Heavy Metal music circles tend to label those who listen to Heavy Metal music as rebellious, and even deviant. Such negative labels are likely to cause the social group that does not listen to Heavy Metal music to alienate, to a certain level, youth who do listen to this genre of music, and this may also lead to the development of turmoil between these two social groups. It is thus of importance that the findings that contradict these negative views associated with the influences of Heavy Metal music be investigated and discussed as they are in the present study.

When asked whether they believe that Heavy Metal music causes violence or aggression, most of the youth stated that they did not believe that this genre of music is in any way causally related to higher incidences of violence and aggression. Some believed that violent tendencies are an inborn trait, and as a result, those Heavy Metal music listeners who

do display violence or aggression do so because they possessed these traits before developing a preference for Heavy Metal music.

In closing, it appears that Heavy Metal music is experienced in a predominantly positive manner by South African youth, with the exception of alcohol and drug use, and social judgement incurred by interest in the music. The music contributes to the youth's well-being, has therapeutic properties, and greatly contributes to social cohesion and bonding. Furthermore, the community that is associated with Heavy Metal music often acts as a support system for many of these youths, who are often unable to obtain support from other sources, such as their friends and families, and therefore turn to other Heavy Metal music listeners. This occurs because most youth experience a close, tight-knit relationship with other Heavy Metal music listeners. They reveal that they have a unique bond with other Heavy Metal music listeners, and this seems to come from their shared interest and the friendly, caring nature among many Heavy Metal music listeners.

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Interviews

Participant 1 (White male, age 33, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 3 April 2015.

Participant 2 (White male, age 24, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 3 April 2015.

Participant 3 (White male, age 28, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 3 April 2015.

Participant 4 (White female, age 22, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 3 April 2015.

Participant 5 (White male, age 33, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 3 April 2015.

Participant 6 (White male, age 22, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 3 April 2015.

Participant 7 (White male, age 22, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 3 April 2015.

Participant 8 (White male, age 23, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 3 April 2015.

Participant 9 (White male, age 28, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 4 April 2015.

Participant 10 (White male, age 26, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 4 April 2015.

Participant 11 (Coloured male, age 21, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 4 April 2015.

Participant 12 (White female, age 20, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 4 April 2015.

Participant 13 (White male, age 25, Afrikaans speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 4 April 2015.

Participant 14 (White male, age 26, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 4 April 2015.

Participant 15 (White female, age 25, Afrikaans speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 4 April 2015.

Participant 16 (White female, age 19, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 4 April 2015.

Participant 17 (White female, age 28, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 5 April 2015.

Participant 18 (White male, age 28, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 5 April 2015.

Participant 19 (Black female, age 24, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 5 April 2015.

Participant 20 (White female, age 27, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 5 April 2015.

Participant 21 (White male, age 29, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 5 April 2015.

Participant 22 (White male, age 29, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 5 April 2015.

Focus group

Participant 1 (White male, age 25, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 5 April 2015.

Participant 2 (White male, age 19, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 5 April 2015.

Participant 3 (White male, age 24, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 5 April 2015.

Participant 4 (White male, age 28, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 5 April 2015.

Participant 5 (Coloured male, age 33, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 5 April 2015.

Participant 6 (White male, age 28, English speaking). Witchfest, Newtown, Johannesburg, 5 April 2015.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter reviews the conclusions, recommendations, and limitations that emerged in the study. Following a brief summary of the study, noteworthy conclusions drawn from the findings are discussed. The barriers or limitations that arose throughout the study that are pertinent to the study's findings are presented next. Finally, recommendations for future research are presented based on the conclusions and limitations discussed.

3.1 Conclusions

The current study aimed to uncover the experiences of South African youth related to Heavy Metal music. Previous studies reveal that Heavy Metal music can have profound influences on listeners. Heavy Metal music has been found to aid in the identity development of those who listen to it and the experience of listening to the music is generally rather fulfilling (Martin, 2011:92). However, the negative stigma surrounding Heavy Metal music, owing to its seemingly aggressive and violent nature, particularly within the lyrical content and the extreme fast-paced use of instruments, has caused a great deal of concern for those who do not listen to Heavy Metal music (Becknell *et al.*, 2008:24). Nevertheless, very little research exists on the experiences of Heavy Metal music among South African youth. Furthermore, the majority of current studies have been completed chiefly within a quantitative framework. This presents a research gap, as a study which focuses on South African youth had not been undertaken yet. Moreover, there also appears to be a gap in research in terms of these youth's subjective experiences. This is due to the fact that (as far as the researcher's knowledge goes) the qualitative paradigm has not, as of yet, been employed with a research study of this kind.

The present study was informed by an interpretivist ontology, with which people view reality as relative and subjective, as well as constructed and interpreted, and a constructivist epistemology, which holds that knowledge is constructed by people in interaction through a process of interpretation (Sarantakos, 2005:30; Scotland, 2012:9). Two qualitative, non-probability sampling methods, namely purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used to obtain participants for the study that fit the sampling criteria, which held that only South African listeners of Heavy Metal music between the ages of 18 and 35 would take part in the

study. Participants were retrieved from a popular South African Heavy Metal music festival, named Witchfest, which took place over three days from 3-5 April 2015, and which the researcher attended. The researcher employed three data gathering methods in the study, which included semi-structure interviews, one focus group, and nonparticipant observation. All the researcher's observations were recorded in writing on site and the interviews were all digitally recorded and these recordings were transcribed and subjected to a qualitative content analysis, as outlined in sources such as Miles *et al.* (2014:344). Following this method, the researcher first transcribed the recorder data and wrote out the observational data. Thereafter, the researcher read through the data and looked for emergent ideas within the data. These ideas were then coded in the form of specific 'code words'. The researcher initially made use of the research questions in order to draw up the main code words, and then refined these into secondary codes, or sub-codes. Following this, codes were grouped into categories based on conceptual similarities.

The findings of the present study indicate that participants were predominantly introduced to Heavy Metal music during their late childhood years and early adolescence, by their families and friends who also listen to this genre of music.

According to findings of the present study there appears also to be a strong sense of unity and cohesion among Heavy Metal music listeners. This cohesion appears to be largely stimulated by the contrasting dynamic between the ingroup and the outgroup which produces an 'us versus them' experience. This contrast is also evident in the unusual style of clothing and appearance that are common among Heavy Metal music listeners when compared to the appearance of non-listeners. Participants in the present study often stated that they felt like outsiders even before the development of their interest in Heavy Metal music. As a result of this, participants stated that they found an unconventional and desirable identity among other Heavy Metal music listeners. Nevertheless, participants frequently asserted that they felt judged, stereotyped and not accepted by those who do not listen to Heavy Metal music; this premise typical points to ingroup versus outgroup dynamics (Forsyth, 2010:420). The applicable construct here is known as labelling, which is a sociological concept that proposes that people often ascribe labels and negative evaluations to others and their behaviours (Ferrante, 2008:133). Participants in the present study stated that these labels often were damaging to their personal relationships, and often caused them to become estranged from

their families and lose their friends. Furthermore, a great number of participants asserted that their families lack acceptance and understanding in terms of their preference for Heavy Metal music. Such negative evaluations and lack of acceptance are likely to be worse in South Africa, where many of the citizens possess rather traditionalist and religious views of society (De Waal, 2015), and are accordingly prone to rejecting Heavy Metal music and its listeners. Furthermore, as is common among South African youth who experience rejection (Pinnock, n.d), the youth who participated in the present study believed that they did not obtain the necessary support from their families or friends. Commonly, many of these alienated youths turn to drugs or alcohol as a result of such a situation, or join gangs in order overcome their tumult and to acquire the social support that they are not receiving at home (Pinnock, n.d; Shabangu, n.d:8). In order to obtain the support that they are not receiving from the people in their lives, youth who listen to Heavy Metal music are inclined to turn to the music and the Heavy Metal community.

An additional finding indicates that a great number of participants in the present study believe that Heavy Metal music does not produce aggressive and violent tendencies. This counters non-listeners' commonly held beliefs that Heavy Metal music often causes hostility and negative behaviours in those who listen to this genre of music (Moberg, 2012:113). The vast majority of participants asserted that those who listen to Heavy Metal music and display aggression possessed this attribute before they started listening to this genre of music. This finding is supported by studies of the development of aggression, which agree that aggression is an innate trait with which individuals are born (Smith, 2008). In addition, findings of the present study largely indicated that participants were often drawn to Heavy Metal music because other listeners are frequently considered to be caring, friendly and accepting (rather than aggressive) by participants. Similarly, participants also asserted that they were able to constructively release (rather than violently express) their frustrations by listening to Heavy Metal music, and taking part in associated activities such as Moshpits. Such seemingly aggressive behaviours, which also include Windmilling and Wall-of-death, seem to signify a ritualized means for expressing participants' feelings, and are often typified by caring and compassionate behaviours. The findings of the present study therefore not only challenge views that Heavy Metal music causes violence and aggression, but they also show Heavy Metal music's potential for acting as a constructive outlet for youth's emotional turmoil. The authentic and relatable lyrics, the powerful instrumental usage, the activities involved in this

genre of music such as Moshpits, the supportive nature and sense of belonging experienced in relation to this genre of music and its associated community, all suggest that Heavy Metal music could possibly play a role in supporting the social and emotional well-being of youth who listen to this genre of music.

In the context of medical sociology, well-being is regarded as a holistic concept which refers to the complete state of wellness of individuals, and which includes physical, emotional, cognitive and even spiritual dimensions (Cockerham, 2003:3). These findings oppose commonly held stereotypes of non-listeners related to Heavy Metal music, such as its potential for causing reckless behaviour in youth. However, the possible harm that these stereotypes could inflict on listeners of Heavy Metal music is cause for concern, as these views increase the turmoil between listeners and non-listeners of Heavy Metal music. It is thus hoped that the findings of the present study would challenge these stereotypes. However, the use of alcohol and drugs amongst some listeners of Heavy Metal music serves as counterpoint to the findings noted above, and additional research is required to investigate the nature, extent, and influence of these phenomena on youth who listen to this genre of music.

However, existing literature predominantly supports the notion that Heavy Metal music promotes, rather than detracts from well-being among youth. In their study on the function of music, Brown and Jellison (2012:335) find that music could aid youth in coping with an assortment of social and personal problems. Such issues include, among others, conflict within the family, problems between friends, or tumult within communities. What's more, on a personal level, it was even found that music can help youth cope with certain physical disabilities (Brown & Jellison, 2012:335). Moreover, owing to the fact that Heavy Metal music is an intense and authentic genre of music, to which youth can often relate, it frequently supports youth's self-expression, and ultimately aids in their identity development (Pieslak, 2008:38). Similarly, participants also reported experiencing a sense of calm after they had listened to Heavy Metal music. According to existing literature, youth have a tendency to feel calmed after listening to Heavy Metal music (Sharman & Dingle, 2015). This finding furthermore contradicts commonly held views of non-listeners of Heavy Metal music, which hold that this genre of music produces violence and aggression in young people.

The study conducted by Senekal (2011:76), which specifically explored Heavy Metal music within the Afrikaner-community of South Africa, found that the norms within this community reject dominant norms of society, and in turn create new, alternative norms that are related to behaviours and practices of this community, such as Moshpits. The present study substantiates Senekal's conclusion owing to the fact that the findings of the present study show that South African youth tend to reject dominant norms, and create new norms, such as their courteous, caring behaviours towards other Heavy Metal music listeners, and their unconventional norms of dress. These findings further propose that such shared norms lead to a greater sense of social cohesion among South African youth who listen to Heavy Metal music. The similarity of dress and physical appearance among 'Metalheads' also result in a high degree of entativity, which refers to the apparent cohesiveness of a group of people, and is determined, amongst other things, by similarities of dress and manner (Forsyth, 2010:14). These high levels of entativity likely contribute to the distinct sense of belonging that occurs among Heavy Metal music listeners, and is also likely to enhance their polarization with those outside of this group, as their unconventional dress and mannerisms clearly set them apart from others. All of these findings suggest the development of a unique sub-culture (Ferrante, 2008:58) among South African youth who listen to Heavy Metal music. This finding is supported by existing literature, as Heavy Metal music was identified as a sub-culture due to the unique social interactions occurring between listeners, and owing to the fact that the group has developed distinctive norms such as their appearance, taking part in Moshpits, and the like. Each society has its own unique values, norms and beliefs (Ferrante, 2008:58; Senekal, 2011:96). Norms reflect the rules of a particular culture, and thus dictate how people should behave within that said culture (Ferrante, 2008:58). It is important to listeners and society as a whole to understand the influences of Heavy Metal music and to recognise the norms that ultimately develop within its associated community, as the themes within Heavy Metal music often rebel against commonly held societal norms, and due to the fact that non-listeners of Heavy Metal music tend to shun listeners of this genre of music.

With this study, and its findings, the researcher uncovers, to some extent, the influences of Heavy Metal music. This is particularly important in a country like South Africa, where there are many conservative and religious individuals who act in opposition to this music-type (De Waal, 2015). In demonstrating that most participants felt a sense of

belonging amongst fellow fans of Heavy Metal music which enhanced their sense of well-being, the value of Heavy Metal music for youth in terms of participants' personal and social experiences has been illustrated in the present study.

3.2 Limitations of the Study

As is the case with all scholarly research, this study is not without its limitations. The researcher was only able to recruit, interview, and observe participants at a single Heavy Metal music festival, which to some extent limited the pool of available participants from whom the data were gathered. Constraints of personal finances, the limited time available to complete the study, as well as the fact that only a very small number of Heavy Metal music festivals occur each year, contributed to this eventuality. However, as these festivals occur so rarely, Witchfest was attended by a large number of participants from many different South African provinces and who come from all walks of life; which to some extent mitigated this shortcoming.

Another limitation of the present study was the transferability of the findings is limited mostly to white males, and to a lesser extent, white females with similar contexts to those of the participants in the present study. As such, additional research would be required to uncover how South African youth of different races and genders experience Heavy Metal music. The transferability of the research findings constitutes a limitation because the findings in the present study suggest that the majority of Heavy Metal music listeners are white and male. This means that transferability is mostly restricted to white males, and indicates that white females with similar contexts to those who participated in the present study, are not well represented here. Owing to the fact that the research study was conducted with South African youth, it is of importance that a greater number of females and different races be included in future studies.

3.3 Implications

The findings presented in this study have a number of implications, both in relation to future research, as well as in relation to practical application. These implications and recommendations are discussed in this section.

The finding indicating the clear presence of drugs and alcohol among South African youth who listen to Heavy Metal music may imply the need for professional intervention from health care professionals, seeing that this drug and alcohol use is likely to affect these youth's health and behaviours negatively as it may lead to risk behaviours such as drinking and driving. The findings for the present study further imply a lot for helping professions such as counsellors and other therapists. Particularly with regards to well-being, as it is clear that listening to Heavy Metal music contributes to youth's well-being, due to the fact that participants in the research study often reported experiencing the music as therapeutic. This contradicts negative and stereotypical views of Heavy Metal music, which propose that this genre of music contributes to destructive, risk behaviours such as suicide in youth, and instead sheds light on the effects that Heavy Metal music has on youngsters within the context of South Africa. Further research is, however, necessary with regards to Heavy Metal music and the presence, nature, and influence of drugs and alcohol within this 'scene'.

What's more, findings in the present study with regards to the seemingly aggressive nature of Heavy Metal music, along with the relational issues that result between listeners and non-listeners of Heavy Metal music, which often arise due to a lack in understanding of Heavy Metal music and effects on the part of non-listeners, may also have important implications for a study of this kind. This may, for one, serve to improve listeners' understandings of how listening to Heavy Metal music affects them on a personal and social level, and it may also serve to improve such understandings for interested non-listeners of this genre of music. Furthermore, in terms of the relationship issues that arise between listeners and non-listeners of Heavy Metal music, the findings of the present study indicating that Heavy Metal music listeners, overall, are friendly and caring (as opposed to aggressive and destructive) contradict dominant views of non-listeners that Heavy Metal music directly causes negative, destructive feelings and behaviours.

3.4 Recommendations for future research

This section is focused on addressing the issues presented in the limitations section above. Recommendations are presented here that might be useful for future studies which are conducted on the topic of the experiences of Heavy Metal music among South African youth.

Future studies could include a sample of older participants, particularly of those over the age of 35, seeing that many listeners of Heavy Metal music appear to be older in age.

Studies in the future could also include a broader range of participants overall. This could be accomplished by future researchers attending more South African Heavy Metal music festivals such as Witchfest, and also by them travelling to various parts of the country to gather data. Similarly, future studies could also include more than one focus group session, which would further enrich the research findings. This would also, to some extent, mitigate the issue of limited transferability in terms of the lack of gender and race-representation in the present study. Such endeavours would require financing and time.

Moreover, the nature, frequency, extent, and outcomes of drug and alcohol use among youth listening to Heavy Metal music were not explored in-depth in the present study, owing to that fact that this did not form part of the central aims that guided the study. Furthermore, the present study also did not investigate whether this drug and alcohol use extends beyond Heavy Metal music festivals and concerts. Future studies thus could focus on investigating these aspects of the influence of Heavy Metal music on South African youth.

3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents a conclusion to the present study by providing an overview of the limitations, implications and recommendations related to the study. In the first section of this chapter an extensive summary and conclusion was presented, within which the entire research process was described. Previous, supporting literature was presented here, as were the research gaps that prompted the study. The data gathering process, as well as the data analysis process, was also briefly outlined here, as were the most important findings drawn from the research study. Limitations that arose during the research process were discussed next, followed by the implications of the study, as well as recommendations for future research on the topic.

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25 March 2015

HHREC Stamp

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT
FORM FOR
South African Youth (ages 18-35) who listen to Heavy Metal music**

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT: An exploration of how South African youth experiences Heavy Metal music

REFERENCE NUMBERS:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Bianca Simone Mulder

ADDRESS: PO Box 11459, Secunda South Africa, 2302

CONTACT NUMBER: 0795175255

You are being invited to take part in a research project that forms part of my research study exploring how South African youth experiences heavy metal music. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the researcher any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the **Humanities and Health Research Ethics Committee (HHREC) of the Faculty of Humanities of the North-West University (NWU.....)** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical guidelines of the National Health Research Ethics Council. It might be necessary for the research ethics committee members or relevant authorities to inspect the research records to make sure that I (the researcher) am conducting research in an ethical manner.

What is this research study all about?

- *This study will be conducted at Witchfest, South Africa and will involve a focus group and a semi structured interview. Both the semi-structured interview and the focus group will consist of a list of 8 questions. The researcher has been trained to use the methods mentioned in the previous sentence.*
- *The duration of the interviews and focus group will be between 20 and 30 minutes.*
- *Approximately 20 participants will be included in this study.*
- *The objectives of this research are to explore how South African youth, between the ages of 18 and 35, experience heavy metal music.*

Why have you been invited to participate?

- *You have been invited to participate because you listen to heavy metal music.*
- *You have also complied with the following inclusion criteria: you are a South African youth between the ages of 18 and 35 who listens to heavy metal music.*
- *You will be excluded if: you are not a South African youth of between the ages of 18 and 35 and if you do not listen to heavy metal music.*

What will your responsibilities be?

- *You will be expected to take part in a semi-structured interview of 8 questions, during which you are expected to answer each question as truthfully and as best to your ability as possible. The interview will be recorded so that I can assess the data later and only I and my supervisor, Dr Werner Nell, will have access to this recording.*
- *Or you will be expected to take part in a focus group session during which the same 8 questions will be asked. Here you will be required to take part in a group discussion of the questions and you will also be expected to answer the questions to the best of your ability. The focus group session will also be recorded.*

Will you benefit from taking part in this research?

- *The direct benefits for you as a participant: while you may enjoy the experience of taking part in the study and talking about something that you are passionate about, and clarifying your feelings about heavy metal music, you will receive no particular reward for your participation.*
- *The indirect benefits include that: this study will serve to expose the influence of Heavy Metal music among South African youth and may lead people to seeing the possible beneficial as well as harmful influences that Heavy Metal music can have on the youth in South Africa.*

Are there risks involved in your taking part in this research and how will these be managed?

- *The risks in this study, and how these will be managed, are summarised in the table below:*

<i>Probable/possible risks/discomforts</i>	<i>Strategies to minimize risk/discomfort</i>
Because you are attending a music festival and prefer to enjoy the music, you may want to stop the interview or focus group session in order to experience the various bands on the line up.	Interviews will not be conducted during the performances. The performances have been scheduled to start at 10:00 am and continue until 23:30 pm. Interviews will thus take place during the morning before 10:00 am.
During the focus group session, you will be interviewed as part of a group. Others also taking part in the focus group session will therefore know that you have participated and will also know what you have said.	Group rules with regards to confidentiality will be negotiated before the focus group session commences.
During the focus group session some frustrations may arise as the conversation develops. These may be due to interruptions among the participants themselves.	The researcher will ensure that the discussion is properly facilitated so that each participant is given a chance to speak and this rule will also be negotiated before the focus group session commences.
There may be some frustration during the interview and focus group with regards to noise.	The researcher will, as far as possible, avoid noisy areas when conducting the interview and focus group.
There is a possibility that some of the questions may be sensitive in nature or may cause you some discomfort.	You are free to answer questions that you feel comfortable with. Certain questions can be skipped if they cause you discomfort.

- *However, the benefits (as noted above) outweigh the risk.*

Who will have access to the data?

Anonymity (that is, in no way will your results be linked to your identity) will be ensured in the study by way of de-identifying participants during the data evaluation process. No participant will be referred to by name during the data evaluation process and their personal details will also not be published in the final report (mini dissertation). During the data collection process (the interview and focus group) participants will not be addressed by their name, instead they will be assigned a number (P1). Confidentiality (that is, I assure you that we will protect the information we have about you) will also be ensured. Some of your privacy might be lost during this study (e.g., you will be asked to provide your name and contact details) but your name will never be made known and your data will be handled as confidentially as possible. No individuals' identifiers will be used in any publications resulting from this study and only the team of researchers will work with the information that you shared. All sensitive information will be protected by locking it up and storing it on a password protected computer.

- *Only I, the researcher, and my supervisor, Dr Werner Nell, will have access to your personal information and the answers that you provide. Data will be kept safe and secure by locking hard copies in locked cupboards in the researcher's office and for electronic data it will be password protected.*

- *Audio-recorded data will be sent to a transcriber who will sign a confidentiality clause (i.e., he will not be allowed to talk to anyone about any aspect of the data). As soon as data has been transcribed it will be deleted from the recorders. The transcripts will be stored on a password-protected computer. All co-coders will sign confidentiality clauses.*
- *Data will be stored electronically for a period of 5 years.*

What will happen to the data?

The data from this study will be reported in the following ways: findings will be reported in the form of a mini-dissertation and may be published in an online research journal. In all of this reporting, you will not be personally identified. This means that the reporting will not include your name or details that will help others to know that you participated (e.g., your address or the name of your school).

The data may be re-used in future studies. The data produced for the current study could be used for future comparative studies. I, researcher, also intend to add one or two secondary research aims and questions (on religion and wellbeing with regards to experiences and influences of heavy metal music within the South African context) for one or two research studies in the future.

Will you be paid or compensated to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?

No, you will not be paid or compensated to take part in the study. There will, however, be no personal costs involved for your participation in the study as you will in no way be harmed by your participation.

How will you know about the findings?

- The general findings of the research will be shared with you via email. If you would like feedback on the results of the study, then please provide your email address below.

Is there anything else that you should know or do?

- You can contact me, Bianca Mulder, at 0795175255 or bianca.mulder@yahoo.com if you have any further queries or encounter any problems.
- Alternatively, you can contact my supervisor, Dr Werner Nell at 016 910 3427 or Werner.Nell@nwu.ac.za.
- You can contact the chair of the Humanities and Health Research Ethics Committee (Prof Linda Theron) at 016 910 3076 or Linda.theron@nwu.ac.za if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher. You can also contact, the co-chair, Prof Tumi Khumalo (016 910 3397 or Tumi.khumalo@nwu.ac.za). You can leave a message for either Linda or Tumi with Ms Daleen Claasens (016 910 30441)
- You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

Declaration by participant

By signing below, I agree to take part in a research study entitled: An exploration of how South African youth experiences Heavy Metal music

I declare that:

- I have read and understood this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to both the person obtaining consent, as well as the researcher (if this is a different person), and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I understand that what I contribute (what I say) could be reproduced publically and/or quoted, but without reference to my personal identity.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of participant

.....
Signature of witness

- You may contact me again Yes No
- I would like a summary of the findings of this research Yes No

Participant Age _____ (you may refuse to provide your age)

The best way to reach me is:

Name & Surname: _____

Postal Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Cell Phone Number: _____

In case the above details change, please contact the following person who knows me well and who does not live with me and who will help you to contact me:

Name & Surname:

Phone/ Cell Phone Number /Email:

Declaration by person obtaining consent

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use a interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of person obtaining consent

.....
Signature of witness

Declaration by researcher

I (*name*) declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did/did not use a interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) on (*date*) 20....

.....
Signature of researcher

.....
Signature of witness