IN AND OUT OF CONTROL: THE CONSUMPTION OF LOUDNESS IN THE METAL COMMUNITY

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Acknowledgment

I had thought about different ways to introduce these acknowledgements, but they all sounded cheesy. So, I will do it the metal way, as straight as a punch in the face!

I first want to express my unfathomable gratitude to my doll, my muse, and partner; Anne-Laure, who gives me something to live for, and graces me with her love and affection every day.

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Table of contents

Soundtrack

Main tracks (available at: goo.gl/GGjLa4)

Artist	Title	Released	Label
Black Sabbath	Iron Man	1971	Warner Bros
Deep Purple	Highway Star	1972	EMI
Led Zeppelin	Dazed and Confused	1967	Tower
Sunn O)))	Aghartha	2009	Southern Lord
Blut Aus Nord	Chapter I	2006	Candlelight Records
Vampillia	Land	2011	Important Records
Neurosis	Under the Surface	1999	Relapse Records
Mastodon	Oblivion (Instrumental)	2009	Reprise
The Dillinger Escape Plan	43% Burnt	1999	Relapse Records, Hydra Head Records
Painkiller	Tortured souls	1992	Earache
Judas Priest	Painkiller	1990	Columbia
Slipknot	Wait and Bleed	1999	Roadrunner
Nine Inch Nails	Hurt (live)	1995	Halo Ten
Bathory	A fine day to die	1988	Under One Flag
Gojira	Oroborus (live)	2008	Listenable, Prosthetic
Lamb of God	Laid to Rest (live)	2004	Epic
Aerosmith	Dream on (live)	1973	Columbia
Slayer	Raining Blood (live)	1986	Def Jam
Amon Amarth	Guardians of Asgaard (live)	2008	Metal Blade
Sepultura	Roots Bloody Roots	1996	Roadrunner
Pantera	Walk (live)	1992	Eastwest
Eyehategod	Blank (live)	1993	Century Media
Liturgy	True Will	2011	Thrill Jock
Machine Head	Davidian (live)	1994	Roadrunner
Arch Enemy	Nemesis (live)	2005	Century Media
Iron Maiden	Hallowed be Thy Name (live)	1982	EMI

Bonus Tracks (available at: goo.gl/ehp7ow)

Artist	Track	Released	Label
AC/DC	Let There be Rock (live)	1977	Albert
Amon Amarth	Deceiver of the Gods (live)	2013	Metal Blade Records
Black Sabbath	Black Sabbath	1970	Vertigo
Cannibal Corpse	Hammered Smashed Face	1992	Metal Blade Records
Death	Pull the Plug	1988	Combat, Relapse
Darkthrone	A Blaze in the Northern Sky	1992	Peaceville
Earth	Teeth of Lions Rule the Divine	1993	Sub Pop
Metallica	Battery	1986	Elektra, Asylum
Metallica	Sad but True	1993	Elektra
Poison	Talk Dirty to Me	1986	Enigma, Capital Records
Steel Panther	That's What Girls are For	2011	Universal Republic

This dissertation features a soundtrack. We suggest, at the beginning of each chapter, two to five songs that our reader is free to play while progressing through our work. The choice of these songs, of their order and association, was lengthily contemplated. These tracks relate to the text in different ways. Some of them echo or reinforce our developments, offering a sonic illustration of the ideas we propose. Some complement our discursive developments, expressing musically ideas or concepts which were too liquid for words. Some are meant to accompany our reader, aiming at affects, images, and sensations which might coincide with the chapter's tone. Yet others are here to offer a counterpoint to our reflections. They do not reinforce our developments as much as propose a different perspective on the issues we address. After much reflection, however, we decided not to make the motivations of our selection explicit. These songs, their sound, and meaning, do not belong to us; and we would therefore like to let our readers appropriate them and form their own understanding about this music and its relation to our text. We nonetheless feel the need to stress one point: none of these tracks was chosen for its lyrics. It

was always the acoustic which guided our decision to include particular songs and associate them with specific chapters.

Beyond these suggested listening, we will also refer, in the body of text, to tracks chosen to illustrate or support more specifically some arguments. These songs are featured in the bonus track section of this list, for documentation. We also used some songs in order to illustrate the different entries of our glossary, which are also included among these bonus tracks.

Table of tables

Table of figures

Table of pictures

Chapter I: Introduction

Suggested listening:

- Black Sabbath – Iron Man (1971)
- Deep Purple – Highway Star (1972)
- Led Zeppelin – Dazed and Confused (1967)

Sound levels during concerts are deafening. The consumption of live music can cause incurable hearing loss with crippling emotional and social consequences. Simple and inexpensive solutions exist to prevent such damages, including the use of hearing protections, small foam, wax, or silicon devices inserted in the ear canal. And yet, many concert-goers still attend concerts unprotected. This puzzling situation led us to formulate the question which guided our doctoral work: how can we explain that some consumers expose themselves to deafening sound level during concerts, despite policy-makers' efforts to communicate on the dangers associated with such practices? We suggest that the inadequacy of current prevention actions might result from an insufficient knowledge of what loudness consumption is, of its meaning and importance for the listener.

Picture 1 – Different models of hearing protections

This introductory chapter offers to lay down the practical and conceptual stakes of our study, and presents an overview of our approach and key findings. The consumption of extreme sound levels is attracting increasing attention from policymakers. The financial cost and psychological harm it implies justify allocating significant resources to design and enforce public actions and communication efforts (cf. I. Hearing as matter of public health). Furthermore, we will suggest that the study of extreme sound consumption can help to understand and address other types of self-destructive practices. An in-depth study of loudness consumption, therefore, has potential to improve individual and social well-being significantly.

Addressing this complex issue will require working at the crossroads of four research traditions: body culture studies, semiotics, sound studies, and public health issues (cf. II. At the crossroads: Conceptual situation of hearing health issues). We suggest that the combination of these theories and perspectives is required to (1) understand the complex motivations of loudness consumption, and (2) design more relevant solutions to address this issue. Our study of loudness, however, will not only feed on these theories, but also provide an opportunity to challenge and extend them in new directions.

Our ethnographic work was the occasion to confront these theoretical traditions to consumers' discourses and practices. The metal community, which places loudness at the heart of its collective identity, offered an ideal context to observe and discuss the consumption of extreme sound levels during concerts (cf. III. Research site: Loudness and the metal community). *A priori*, the subculture seemed like a particularly difficult environment for self-protection to prevail. Notably, its apparent celebration of violence, destruction, and chaos clashed with the normative message of current public policies, aimed primarily at self-preservation.

We will close this introduction with the presentation of our dissertation outline, emphasizing the articulation of our theoretical, methodological, and empirical chapters (IV. Dissertation outline).

I. Hearing as matter of public health

Hearing deficiencies are currently a matter of public health. Both private and state-funded associations across the world are now taking action to prevent hearing loss and improve the living conditions of people suffering from such deficiencies. Action on Hearing Loss, for example, is a nonprofit British organization which offers a helpline, as well as diverse online resources, to support individuals suffering from hearing impairment. The association also launched an advertising campaign in 2012 advocating self-protection against loud music (www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk).[1] The individual and social costs of hearing impairment justify such efforts. The World Health Organization notes that by limiting individuals' access to services and excluding them from communication, partial or complete deafness "can have a significant impact on everyday life, causing feelings of loneliness, isolation and frustration […]" (www.who.int).[2] In addition to the emotional and psychological distress such handicap can cause, the socio-economic consequences of hearing loss constitute a strong enticement to address the situation. A 2006 report ordered by Hear-it, an international non-profit organization (www.hear-it.org), indicates that hearing impairment cost the United Kingdom around £18 billion in 2006 in loss of productivity and unemployment alone (Shield 2006, p167).

This cost is not entirely incumbent upon live music consumption. The causes of hearing loss are numerous, including congenital conditions (e.g. maternal rubella, low birth weight), ear infections, head injuries, and aging (www.nidcd.nih.gov).[3] Noise-induced hearing loss due to recreational activities is, nonetheless, a major public health issue, especially among the youth. The Action on Hearing Loss organization, in its 2011 report *Hearing Matters*, notes that the youth constitutes a key-group at risk of hearing loss, notably due to the increasing volume of music in clubs, gigs, and open air festivals (Action on Hearing Loss 2011, p42). Beyond hearing loss, exposure to extreme sound levels sometimes triggers tinnitus, a persistent buzzing in the

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[1] http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/news-and-events/london/news/hard-hitting-new-advertising-campaign.aspx
[2] http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs300/en/
[3] http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/Pages/Default.aspx

ear, which can cause difficulties to sleep or to focus, as well as depression (Holmes and Padgham 2009). Adding to this issue's urgency, these impairments are currently irreversible and bound to worsen over the individual's lifetime (www.nidcd.nih.gov).[4]

This situation is all the more deplorable that simple solutions exist to prevent such harm. Hearing protections, also known as earplugs, can efficiently shield consumers from noise-induced hearing loss. These protections are small devices made of foam, wax, or silicon which are inserted in the ear to reduce hair cells' exposure to detrimental sounds.[5] Used properly, basic foam protections, available for as cheap as 20 cents online (www.amazon.com)[6] and often for free during concerts, decrease noise exposure by approximately 35 decibels (dB).[7] In a concert setting, it therefore brings the sound pressure applied to the inner ear down from 105 dB (i.e. the concert usual sound intensity) to a safer 85 dB; a sound level which can be enjoyed without risk of hearing loss (www.cdc.gov).[8] Despite the simplicity and availability of such solutions, hearing protections stay widely underused. A 2007 national survey in the United Kingdom (1381 respondents aged 16 to 30) revealed that only 3% of the respondents used hearing protections while clubbing or attending concerts (Bennett 2007, p34). Although our own observations indicate that such a figure might significantly underestimate the use of hearing protections, it nonetheless reflects a large tendency not to self-protect facing loud noises, and notably live music.

The proximity of this issue with other types of public health hazards bolsters the relevance of our study. Superficially at least, the case of hearing loss parallels a broader category of public health issues involving the use of protections in dangerous recreational activities. For instance, the diffusion of condoms, skiing helmets, or life vest in boating activities appears to imply

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[4] http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/pages/noise.aspx
[5] Hair cells are auditory sensory receptors. Noise-induced hearing loss is frequently caused by the destruction of these cells.
[6] http://www.amazon.com/Flents-Quiet-Please-Plugs-50-Pair/dp/B001J4HB1C/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1398418645&sr=8-1&keywords=foam+ear+plugs
[7] The decibel is a unit used to express the physical pressure of sound.
[8] http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise/noisemeter.html

similar challenges: policy-makers struggle to promote the adoption of a simple protective solution which could prevent dramatic health consequences (i.e. sexually transmitted diseases and infections, fatal head injuries, drowning). Some of these issues are particularly pressing. For instance, the year 2012 witnessed an estimated 2.3 million new HIV infections worldwide (Unaids 2013, p3). Although this figure has been constantly decreasing since the mid-1990s, the use of condom has also significantly declined in some countries (Unaids 2013, p6). This alarming step back is a forceful reminder that much is left to be done to efficiently promote self-protective products.

Remarkably, the trade-offs implied by loudness consumption are also closely related to those involved by other types of self-destructive practices. For example, the confrontation of short-term pleasure (i.e. listening to music unprotected) and long-term well-being (i.e. preserving one's auditory capabilities) is also relevant to unhealthy food consumption (e.g. enjoying tasty but fatty food now vs. being fit on the long-run) or tobacco consumption (e.g. enjoying a cigarette now vs. avoiding cancers several years down the road). Together, these self-destructive consumptions constitute major public health challenges. Obesity, for instance, is one of the leading causes of preventable death in the United States, and carried an annual cost close to \$150 billion in 2008 (www.cdc.gov).[9] In the US as well, smoking carried a medical cost of \$133 billion dollars for the years 2009 to 2012, and is estimated to cause over 480 000 deaths each year (www.cdc.gov).[10]

By offering these parallels, we do not imply that every health issue is similar. The consumptions of unprotected leisure, tobacco, or unhealthy food certainly have their specificities; and addressing them should take into account their distinctive characteristics. At the very least, however, these perspectives indicate that our study could potentially inform and help to address a broader category of public health issues. It will be our responsibility, in this dissertation, to determine to what extent these issues are actually comparable.

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[9] http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html
[10] http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/economics/econ_facts/index.htm and http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/tobacco_related_mortality/index.html

II. At the crossroads: Conceptual situation of hearing health issues

Despite its apparent simplicity, the question which motivated our work will require mobilizing and relating diverse and complementary research fields. We suggest that loudness consumption is a complex and multidimensional issue. Failure to consider this complexity might lead to design inefficient or even counter-productive political answers. Four broad research traditions informed our effort to understand consumers' willing exposure to extreme sound levels, as well as our search for better adapted political actions: public health policies, body culture studies, sound studies, and semiotics. This short introduction, which draws a broad panorama of these different fields, is meant to paint the basic theoretical matrix of our work. Our developments will discuss them in more depth and breadth when the time comes.

A. Public health policies and consumer psychology

Straddling theory and practice, the first field to consider is that of public health policies. The discrepancy between policy-makers' efforts and some consumers' refusal to self-protect raises doubts regarding current policies' efficiency and principles. If, despite public actions, only 3% of the 16 to 30 years old uses hearing protections in recreational activities (Bennett 2007, p34), it appears necessary to reconsider the way public prevention is currently performed. Our work will therefore constitute an attempt to better evaluate and transform existing policies. To do so, we will leverage two intellectual traditions related to public health. The first one is consumer health psychology. We regroup under this label two robust and active streams of psychological research dedicated to improve consumers' well-being, namely the self-control (Hoch and Loewenstein 1991) and visceral influence literatures (Loewenstein 1996).[11] For the past 20 years, these two corpuses have consistently worked to curb excessive and deleterious consumption practices, such as overeating or smoking. As such, they propose one way to think and frame the loudness consumption issue; but, our interest in these literatures does not stop here.

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[11] The visceral influence literature is an occurrence of behavioral decision theory. We will justify our use of this label in our theoretical section (cf. Chapter II: Theoretical foundations – A critical review of consumer health psychology).

Researchers in these two subfields have made significant efforts to publicize their results and philosophy through best-selling popularizations (Ariely 2010, 2011; Baumeister, Heatherton, and Tice 1995; Thaler and Sunstein 2009). By joining think tanks and administrations, prominent authors in the field have firmly established these two literatures' influence on health policies. Epitomizing such political involvement, Cass Sunstein, co-author of *Nudge*, a best-selling book which summarizes consumer health psychology's key findings, was appointed administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in the United-States (www.washingtonpost.com).[12] This office's responsibility is notably to "protect public health, welfare, safety, and our environment while promoting economic growth, innovation, competitiveness, and job creation…" (www.whitehouse.gov).[13] These media and political presences give consumer health psychology the potential to profoundly structure the content and form of current policies. As such, they do not only offer resources to understand loudness consumption, but also to understand the ideological foundations of current health policies and communications.

Deconstructing these ideological foundations, however, will require mobilizing more critical approaches to health policies and research. We will notably extend theories developed by Michel Foucault (1972 [1964], 1975) and Georges Vigarello (2004 [1978]) to emphasize the political dimension of current research on self-destructive consumption. These authors' precise articulation of power, knowledge, and health policies will allow, and to a large degree require, putting consumer health psychology back into the socio-historical context which motivates it. This historical contextualization will allow better evaluating the stakes and far-reaching implications of current health research and policies, taking into account not only their short-term efficiency, but also long-term social and individual well-being.

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[12] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/07/AR2009010704311.html
[13] http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg_default

B. Body culture studies: Between constructivism and phenomenology

Working on the puzzle of loudness consumption will also require drawing upon and extending a vast and heteroclite research stream sometimes referred to as body culture studies. We use the expression to denote a collection of sociological, anthropological, and philosophical works which investigates the social and cultural embeddedness of the body, of its shape, management, and experience. This research tradition will inform our work in two ways.

First, the historical and philosophical analyses of Vigarello (2004 [1978]) and Foucault (1975), which provided a departure point for our critical reading of consumer health psychology, are precisely at the cross-roads of body culture studies and health policies. These studies suggest that it is notably *through* the body that public policies come to enforce specific social projects. By constraining its form, management, and experience, policy-makers, with the support of scientific institutions, enact and protect value systems which are, to a large extent, self-serving. Body culture studies offer a wide range of theories and concepts to unearth, define, and discuss the processes through which these policies shape society. It will therefore constitute a crucial resource in our effort to better evaluate and transform public policies and the theories which support them.

Our research, however, does not only involve the body as a political stake, but also as a personal subjective experience. Asking why consumers willingly expose themselves to destructive sound levels invites to consider the positive value loudness takes for these consumers. Current health research systematically fails to take into account the positive function and meaning of self-destructive consumption practices (Block et al. 2011). To address this absence, we will propose to approach loudness consumption as a profound, meaningful, and multi-faceted somatic experience. In the process, we will draw on the phenomenological tradition of body culture studies. This tradition approaches the body not as an historical object whose meaning should be unpacked, but as an incarnated sensitivity, an ambiguous subject-object through which we experience our everyday lives (Marzano 2007b, pp3-9)**.** In

doing so, it breaks with the constructivist and sometimes overly deterministic, perspectives of scholars such as Foucault and Vigarello.

A central concern in this dissertation will be to relate these two levels of analysis, to reconcile political approaches focusing primarily on the body as a historical construct, and phenomenological approaches which favor a more intimate perspective on the body as an experience. We will argue that these two perspectives are complementary, inherently bound in the development of our social and individual lives. As such, failure to consider one or the other would lead to design policies without a solid understanding of the situation at hand. Our use of body culture studies will rely on seminal works in the field, as well as recent and well-informed reviews and extensions (Detrez 2004; Le Breton 2011 [1990], 2012 [2002]; Marzano 2007a, 2007b).

C. Sound studies: Definition and epistemological significance of loudness

Sound studies is a vast interdisciplinary movement that invites to "listen to the world" and approach sound as both an object of study and epistemology to rejuvenate the critical imagination (Bull and Back 2003). It notably emerged in reaction to the predominance of ocular-centric research paradigms, i.e. focused on the textual and the visual, in a wide range of social sciences (Keeling and Kun 2011, Mattern and Salmon 2008, Samuels, Meintjes, Ochoa, and Porcello 2010). Sound studies advocates a sounded approach to our social life which would favor more subjective and embodied knowledge of the world (Bull and Back 2003, p4). Although we did not initially design this dissertation as a sound studies project, emphasizing the ties which relate our research to this growing movement can cast light on the foundations and significance of our work.

First, our definition of loudness strongly resonates with sound studies' approach. Sound in general, and loudness in particular, are complex subjects that accept different definitions depending on the theoretical and practical contexts considered. Psychoacoustics, a brand of psychology, offers an initial disambiguation by differentiating the sound intensity, i.e. an objective measure expressed in decibels, from loudness: the "subjective intensity of a sound"

(Florentine 2011, p3). Loudness is a percept. While it frequently correlates with the objective sound level, it also depends on other factors such as multisensory interactions (Fastl and Florentine 2011, p208-211), interactions with sounds' pitch or timbre (Melara and Marks 1990), and other contextual effects (Arieh and Marks 2011, p57).[14]

Although psychoacoustics introduces the relativity of loudness, it stays a one-dimensional, individual, quantitative measure, assuming a universal definition of its object. Sound studies invites to enrich this definition in at least two ways. First, it proposes to consider that the consumption of sound, which includes loudness, is not individual but collective and relational (LaBelle 2010). Its somatic experience and history relate individuals in time and space. As such, it is necessary to approach it, not as a disincarnated percept, but as a situated somatic experience anchored in a socio-cultural, practical, and historical context. Second, for sound studies, listening is a cultural practice (Samuels, Meintjes, Ochoa, and Porcello 2010). It is not the passive decoding of an external stimulus, but a material and processual engagement with sound. The individual co-produces the sound she or he listens to, not only by deciphering sonic stimuli using pre-existing lexicons, but also by physically engaging and crafting the sounds received. In a similar spirit, we took a specific interest in the individual and collective performances that give loudness its meaning during concerts.

The second fundamental relation we can establish between our work and sound studies concerns the epistemological status of loudness in our research. Sound studies are an invitation to consider sound not only as an object of study, but also a way of knowing and being into the world (Bull and Back 2003). For both the consumer and researcher, sound is a way to learn about and experience the human condition. The research stream suggests that knowing the world through sound involves different processes and understandings than building knowledge through primarily visual epistemologies. Labelle (2010) further invites to consider the specific

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[14] In this dissertation, we will mainly refer to "loudness consumption" to discuss metal consumers' experience. However, we will sometimes refer to "extreme sound levels consumption" if we want to emphasize that the object of consumption is not a physical sensation of loudness, but rather a certain amount of decibels.

dimensions of sound's materiality - such as the rhythmic, the echoic, or intensity in our case - as micro-epistemologies. Our work answers Labelle's invitation. It acknowledges loudness as both an object of study and micro-epistemology. This dissertation's objective is obviously to better understand concert-goers' motivation to consume loudness. However, it is also an effort to evaluate how approaching well-established consumption issues *through* loudness can contribute to derive fresh and relevant insights for academics and practitioners alike – with respect to our understanding of self-destructive consumption practices and consumers' relation to their body, for example.

In sum, although we did not approach this research project through sound studies, our work shares core concerns and assumptions with this movement. We will therefore have the opportunity to apply some of its key principles and contribute to an ongoing effort aimed at reintroducing sound in our research agendas.

D. Semiotics: The meaning of loudness

The last research tradition we will rely on and extend is semiotics. Semiotics is a science which "aims at elucidating the conditions in which meaning can be produced and perceived." (Floch 1988). It studies how signs, such as words, gestures, garments, sounds or consumption practices make sense, notably, but not exclusively, for the actors who perform them. It will therefore constitute a powerful theory and collection of methods to understand consumers' willing exposition to extreme sound levels. A key assumption in this dissertation is indeed that loudness consumption's rich meaning contributes to explain consumers' acceptance of self-destruction. However, this meaning is elusive. We will argue that it is experienced through profound somatic processes and carries a spiritual value that tends to make it impervious to verbal and textual representations. Semiotics, combined with projective methods of data collection (Guelfand 1999), helped to paint an impressionistic picture, or rather an impressionistic soundscape, of loudness' meaning for consumers.

Our engagement with semiotics, however, was not limited to its use. We also took our doctoral work as an opportunity to question and research semiotics itself. Studying concert consumption was first the occasion to

consider the possibility and modalities of a semiotics of sound. At first sight, the integral power and dense materiality of loudness during concerts did not lend themselves to the processes of distinction and articulation which are central to semiotics (Floch 1990, p5). As such, they cast doubt on the relevance of a semiotic framework when it comes to sound or some of its dimensions at least. Our work therefore participates in an effort to evaluate whether and how semiotics can contribute to the research, representation, and discussion of sound and its experience. Relatedly, our study pressed us to consider the power and limitations of semiotics to articulate consumers' subjective and intimate experiences. The profound somatic processes at stake in sound consumption indeed appeared to involve a form of sense-making which partly escaped language, an idea which is receiving increasing attention in anthropology, for example (Howes 2011). This research was therefore the occasion to study how semiotics could facilitate the description and discussion of embodied meaning, but also how failures to adapt this semiotic framework might ultimately curb our understanding of consumption phenomena.

III. Research site: Loudness and the metal community

The ethnographic investigation of the metal community constituted a central element of this study. We resorted to ethnographic inquiry to investigate the depth and breadth of loudness consumption. Although, or rather because, our research question appeared so simple, we had to closely consider the individual and collective experience and practice of loudness to reveal its unsuspected complexity. Furthermore, our semiotic research paradigm, which favors a systemic approach to meaning, required such an extensive fieldwork. In this framework, the precise interpretation of a sign, such as loudness, demands a solid knowledge of the culture, of the consumption practices and discourses which structure its meaning.

We defined our research question following preliminary observation sessions in metal concerts. We thus naturally chose this research site to answer it. Metal is a music genre as well as a cultural movement, which emerged at the end of the 1960s with bands such as Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin, and Deep Purple (Konow 2002, pp X-XI). Defining metal parsimoniously has become an

impossible challenge. Walser (1993, p 135), one of the first musicologists to study metal, argues that "[Heavy] metal, like virtually all cultural practices, is continually in flux, driven by its own constitutive contradictions." While there is some consensus regarding its origins, there have been countless debates over the core musical and lyrical characteristics of the genre. Walser (1993) skillfully argued that the genre definition is situated in time and constantly negotiated by its actors (the bands, fans or metalheads,[15] record companies, and shops). Providing a clear and simple definition has been further complicated by the explosion of sub-genres that occurred in the past 30 years (Christie 2003). The metal subculture now comprises numerous sub-subcultures with their own sound, lyrical fields, clothing, favored concert practices, norms, and so on. [16]

Despite this musical, lyrical, and cultural diversity, the metal community presented several characteristics that appeared to run through its different sub-streams and made it a very relevant field for our investigation. First, the community has a clear reverence for loudness, which is historically rooted and manifested in different ways. What characterized the three seminal bands we mentioned previously was notably the unrivaled sonic intensity of their live performances (Konow 2002, Dunn and McFadyen 2005). Among other things, early metal bands differentiated themselves from other acts of the time by playing significantly louder. Furthermore, discursive manifestations of such reverence are pervasive in the genre. Examples include Mötörhead's live album entitled *Everything louder than everyone else* or Manowar's studio album *Louder than hell*.[17] The metal concert, which sociologist Deena Weinstein compared to an "onslaught of sound" (Weinstein 2000 [1991], p23), epitomizes this loudness. Our first-hand experience of live metal music

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[15] Metal enthusiasts like to frequently refer to themselves as "metalheads". We will use this term we refer to the genre aficionados.

[16] We considered the use of different terms to refer to the metal community including the notions of "genre," "subculture," "counterculture," "tribe," and "scene." We will use the terms "subculture" and "genre" synonymously as a way to denote the stable discourses, practices, and performances defining the community's collective identity, notably in relation to the mainstream culture.

[17] This reverence was famously mocked in Rob Reiner's movie *This is Spinäl Tap* (Reiner 1984), a false documentary about the tribulations of a heavy metal band. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xgx4k83zzc. We use the term "heavy metal" to refer to a specific sub-culture within the broader metal community; see Glossary).

confirmed its tremendous power and sheer sonic intensity. These references and illustrations are only meant to give an intuition about loudness' centrality in the metal culture and concert. Our entire dissertation will further unfold its expression and meaning in the subculture.

This reverence for loudness was not the only factor which attracted us to the community, however. Several other dimensions of its culture made it a particularly dense and complex field for hearing protections to prevail, offering an opportunity to identify a wide variety of obstacles to their adoption. First, the metal community tends to cultivate a sense of transgression which is manifested aesthetically (e.g. musical composition and performance, clothing, artworks) and thematically (e.g. lyrics celebrating war, violence, or machismo) – (Kahn-Harris 2007, pp27-49). Metal initially emerged as a youth subculture and defined its identity in reaction to a mainstream and dominant society it rejected (Weinstein 2000 [1991], pp106-111). Although the political ethos of the community has since greatly evolved, the subculture still cultivates, at least superficially, a sense of anti-establishment remarkably expressed through the violence of its performance, sound, and visual aesthetics (see for example the live performance of *Raining Blood* by Slayer on the *Still Reigning Tour*).[18] This antagonism to mainstream norms was likely to make the community particularly critical of dominant health discourses, such as those promoting hearing protections. Second, the community's collective identity is characterized by the coexistence of a strong culture of individual power and radical freedom on one hand (Berger 1999, p289), and a tight normative pressure on the other. This apparent paradox was likely to yield two types of resistances to public health messages: (1) a refusal to comply with externally imposed norms as an act of individual sovereignty, but also (2) a willingness to abide by the genre norms which celebrate the transgression of mainstream social norms and recommendations.

Let us, finally, note that metalheads' relations to sound and the body partly depend on the subgenre considered. We did not restrict our investigation to a specific sub-genre, though, and approached this diversity as a way to

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[18] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2htZJDY4_c

refine our analyses and question our conclusions. We therefore covered a wide range of musical styles, as well as venue sizes and types (from small local concert-houses to week-long open air festivals gathering more than 80.000 metalheads), in an attempt to identify the invariants of loudness consumption in the metal community. This work on invariants, on the stable elements of loudness consumption across sub-genres, allowed us to design more broadly applicable solutions to the practical issue which motivated our doctoral study. While we mostly worked in France, we also collected data in Belgium, Denmark, and Germany. Given the fleeting definition of the genre, we chose to attend concerts that the participants themselves would label as "metal."

IV. Dissertation outline

Our dissertation comprises eight chapters including this introduction. In an attempt to better evaluate and transform current public policies, chapter II offers a critical literature review of consumer health psychology, focused on two of its most prominent sub-streams: (1) the behavioral decision theory relative to nefarious visceral influences (Loewenstein 1996), and (2) the self-control literature (Hoch and Loewenstein 1991). This review's motivation is twofold. Most obviously, consumer health psychology's consistent effort to address dramatic health issues could offer resources to understand and address the issue which motivates this dissertation. Beyond this utilitarian motivation, however, we will argue that a careful analysis of consumer health psychology's principles is required to understand the relative inefficiency and far-reaching implications of current policies.

More specifically, our critical review proposes to identify and discuss the moral assumptions that underlie consumer health psychology. We argue that, despite its claim to objectivity and neutrality, the research stream is a political project which enacts a specific value system. In order to define and articulate this political project, we took a specific interest in the ways consumer health psychology conceptualizes and symbolically frames the body. The body is an experience and symbolic surface that has historically crystallized moral prescriptions and political stakes (Foucault 1984; LeBreton

2011 [1990]). As such, it provided an anchor which allowed reconsidering consumer health psychology in its historical and socio-cultural relativity. Fleshing this political project, we argue that the research stream works towards the mechanization of the body and exile of desire, contributing to the reproduction of a controlled communication society. This movement rests upon a cult of control, which is presented as the only way to prevent the catastrophic dissolution of the biological and social bodies facing the animalistic and violent movement of corporeal desire. In the process, we highlight the individual and social risks and trade-offs associated with such an agenda. By challenging the absolutism of consumer health psychology's benefits, our developments invite to consider alternatives articulations of health, destruction, desire, and the body, such as the one offered by metal consumers.

Chapter III introduces our methodology, presenting both the overarching philosophy of our field work, i.e. our "way of looking at familiar facts" (Leach 1977), and the specific methods we used to investigate loudness consumption. In an attempt to address its elusive character, we worked on an impressionistic picture of loudness meaning. We approached loudness consumption from a variety of perspectives, collecting formally diverse data (e.g. field diaries, photos, videos, interview transcripts) which we articulated using a semiotic framework. Chapter III presents the methods we used to capture the protean manifestations of loudness, including observation methods – unstructured and structured observation, and videography – as well as informal, formal, and projective interviewing methods. We introduce semiotics as a research paradigm which allowed reducing the rich but diverse data we had collected in the field into parsimonious interpretations. We notably discuss the use of semiotic squares as a way to secure richer and more contrasted interpretations about our fieldwork. We illustrate the construction and use of semiotic squares by developing the let-go—control semantic category, which guides our interpretive work and the presentation of our findings.

Remaining chapters introduce and discuss our findings. Chapter IV to VII each approaches loudness consumption from a specific perspective, highlighting its value for consumers. Chapter IV considers the meaning

metalheads attribute to loudness' destructiveness, to its ability to cause physiological damages such as hearing loss or tinnitus. This departure point allows confronting quite directly the ways public policy makers and consumers frame the issue of loudness consumption. We open this chapter with a puzzling observation: many metal consumers have in fact experienced the detrimental effects of extreme sound levels and acknowledge the need to self-protect. We reflect on the ways consumers form this understanding and argue that confronting loudness' destructiveness is the occasion for metal consumers to engage in epistemic and self-transformative processes, which result in the reconfiguration of their relation to the body, health, and self-destruction. Breaking with consumer health psychology's recommendation to exile the body, we argue that significant progress towards public health could be achieved by revalorizing the role of the body as a subject of knowledge when it comes to health and safe practices.

Chapter V departs from consumer health psychology's framing by considering the positive meaning of loudness, beyond its purely destructive connotations. Specifically, we discuss the aesthetic value of loudness and hearing protections. We emphasize how loudness participates in, but also sometimes hinders, metalheads' appreciation of live metal music. This aesthetic discussion emphasizes the diversity of positions towards hearing protection and sound in the community, calling for finer segmentations of the target population. Simultaneously, it offers an opportunity to expose and discuss consumers' active participation in shaping the loudness they consume, notably through the use of hearing protections. Our observations and interpretations present loudness consumption not as a passive process, but as an active engagement with the live sound texture; an engagement which can be as demanding as it is rewarding for consumers. Finally, this aesthetic perspective leads us to identify two fundamental values which underlie most metalheads' attraction to loudness, namely power and authenticity, providing an opportunity to work on consumers' deep motivations not to use hearing protections, beyond the mere symptomatic level.

Chapter VI discusses the spiritual value of loudness for metalheads. Building on and contrasting Duvignaud's and Bataille's approaches to the

sacred (Bataille 1957; Duvignaud 1984 [1973]), we argue that the consumption of loudness constitutes a sacrifice, which allows consumers to experience, negotiate, and transcend a set of interrelated tensions underlying the human experience – let-go and control, the animal and the civilized, death and life. We argue that, in this process, consumers' exposure to extreme sound levels participates in the pursuit of a fundamental continuity with the other, which takes different forms depending on consumers and consumption occasions. In particular, we differentiate two ideal types of spiritual trances: contemplation and ecstasy. This discussion does not only entice to consider the diversity of consumers' experiences within the concert house, but also stresses that the sacrificial consumption of loudness does not necessarily requires a waste of flesh, offering opportunities to think hearing protection within and not against the spiritual experience. Critically, the spiritual meaning of loudness consumption profoundly challenges consumer health psychology's project. The pursuit of continuity core to loudness spiritual experience notably contradicts the research stream's attempt to detach the consumer from the other. We argue that this fundamental discrepancy can contribute to explain current policies' inefficiency and invites to question their very foundations.

Chapter VII addresses the political value of loudness. We identify a fundamental contradiction with respect to metalheads' political engagement. While the genre, its performance, and aesthetics appear to consistently transgress dominant social norms, the metalheads we interviewed quickly and systematically defused this transgression, noting that (1) the genre is apolitical, and that (2) most metal enthusiasts are, in fact, active and well integrated members of society. This apparent discrepancy led us to question loudness' political potential and search for its expression within and beyond the community. Specifically, we argue that loudness performs an embodied discipline, which has potential to enforce and transform value systems within, and to a lesser degree beyond, the community. Conjointly, we emphasize the political permeability of the community, discussing how it got penetrated by dominant political ideologies. Taken together, these developments lead us to challenge both the content and form of current public health policies. We notably advocate a reflexive turn, inviting public health institutions to fully

embrace the political significance of their project in order to design more efficient and ambitious social projects.

Chapter VIII closes this dissertation by addressing some pending issues with respect to loudness consumption and the public health policies that attempt to address it. It adopts a macro-political perspective in order to identify and discuss the difficulties policy-makers might encounter while applying the recommendations we propose in individual chapters. We, furthermore, address the contextual character of our findings, considering to what extent our results, as well as the options we offer, could be extended to other communities and public health issues. Theoretically, this final chapter presents our dissertation's contribution to the three research streams which underlie it: semiotics, body culture, and sound studies. We emphasize how our study of loudness extends, but also challenges these corpuses, creating opportunities for further research. We finally mention, and briefly discuss, three themes which might have been addressed more directly in this dissertation (i.e. time, space, and gender) and discuss how these omissions affect the conceptual and practical relevance and applicability of our work.

Chapter II: Theoretical foundations – A critical review of consumer health psychology

Suggested listening:

- Sunn O))) – Aghartha (2009)
- Blut Aus Nord – Chapter I (2006)
- Vampillia – Land (2011)
- Neurosis – Under the Surface (1999)

Our theoretical section will propose a critical literature review of the consumer psychology dedicated to health issues. Consumer health is no alien to marketing research. Many scholars have dedicated significant efforts to improving individual and social well-being. The clearest illustration is certainly provided by Transformative Consumer Research (TCR), a research stream that "strives to encourage, support, and publicize research that benefits quality of life for all beings engaged in or affected by consumption trends and practices across the world" (Mick et al. 2012, p.6). TCR is a structured and active institution that offers grants, teaching resources, and organizes a biennial conference that gathers international scholars around consumers' welfare; but many non-TCR scholars also design their research with consumers' health in mind. The literature on self-control and self-regulation (Faber and Vohs 2012; Vohs, Baumeister, and Tice 2008), risk perception (Menon, Raghubir, and Agrawal 2008), as well as works in behavioral decision theory (Khan, Dhar, and Wertenbroch 2005; Yang et al. 2012) are regularly motivated by consumers' well-being. The ultimate goal is frequently to prevent consumers from engaging in physically or psychologically self-destructive consumption practices such as overeating (Grier and Moore 2012; Grunert, Bolton, and Raats 2012), smoking and drinking (Pechmann et al. 2012), engaging in risky sexual activities (Fishbein and Middlestadt 2012), or impulse buying (Faber and Vohs 2012). And this illustrative collection of theoretical perspectives and application fields is by no means exhaustive. Although it has not addressed detrimental sound consumption so far (to our knowledge), this corpus of research can certainly help us to understand how similar problems are usually framed and tackled.

We approach this vast literature from a specific angle. We will try to highlight the assumptions it makes regarding the body, especially in its relation to health. Our practical and conceptual interrogations appear located at the crossroads of these two themes. Like eating or smoking, sound consumption is a somatic experience decoded by and potentially degrading the biological body. Despite their central importance, these notions are rarely discussed or even defined in the existing literature. They are taken for granted and assumed to be universally understood. The body is a given. The exact contours of health itself are vague. While psychological health is sometimes mentioned, most studies seem to assume that the healthiest choices are necessarily those with the safest physiological implications (lower calorie intake, toxin level…). It is this obviousness we propose to question. Building on a rich sociological, historical and philosophical tradition, we will try to show that the body, health, and sensations are historically and culturally situated social constructions (Detrez 2002). Through this preliminary theoretical discussion, we wish to deconstruct these apparently consensual evidences and highlight their symbolic underpinnings. This initial discussion is crucial to better understand and complement current efforts to improve consumers' well-being. Indeed, we suggest that the way these different notions are conceptualized will impact the scope and nature of the practical solutions proposed.

Even with such a focused approach, reviewing this corpus is a daunting challenge. Besides its humongous extent, the literatures related to self-destruction are set in diverse and sometimes incommensurable theoretical paradigms. This diversity makes any attempt to define universal assumptions about health and the body hazardous. In an attempt to frame our review more tightly, we have decided to focus on works pertaining to two research streams: (1) the behavioral decision theory relative to nefarious visceral influences, and (2) the self-control literature. Although the boundaries between the two streams have blurred over the years, they still differ significantly in their approach to the body and unhealthy practices. Nonetheless, we thought it might be interesting, not to say necessary, to approach the two literatures simultaneously. Considering their differences, similarities, and multiple connections should help us secure a richer understanding of consumer health

psychology, to identify meaningful commonalities, but also divergences between its sub-streams.[19] As argued in our introduction, the political and media prominence of these two sub-streams motivated this focus (cf. A. Public health policies and consumer psychology).

Most literature reviews start with a difficult question: "When to begin?" Early works on hyperbolic time-discounting by Ainslie (1975) or even Strotz (1955) have been related to health issues and still heavily influence consumer health psychology. Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1962 [1957]) could be used to promote healthy and pro-social behaviors (Becker, Smith, and Ciao 2006). Thaler and Shefrin (1981) economic theory of self-control, dissociating a farsighted planner from a myopic doer, is yet another landmark in the conceptualization of self-control and health issues. However, we decided to overlook these pioneers and start our review more recently with two seminal researches from the 1990s. As a departure point for behavioral decision theory, we will focus on Loewenstein's 1996 "Out of control: Visceral influences on behavior" (Loewenstein 1996). The reason we chose this article as a starting point is that it constitutes the body's thunderous entry in the formulation of health issues. With Loewenstein's approach, the body is not a sidebar anymore. It is not only the victim of consumers' irrationality. It acquires a nefarious agency. This article inaugurates a research stream that will focus on visceral influences and corporeal urges as the main reason for unhealthy practices. For the self-control literature, we chose to start our review with Hoch and Loewenstein's 1991 "Time-inconsistent preferences and consumer self-control" (Hoch and Loewenstein 1991). Two elements drove our decision. First, although the self-control concept had had a long history when Hoch and Loewenstein published their article, the authors were the first to frame it as a struggle between desire and willpower. Despite disagreements over the exact nature of willpower, this basic dichotomy still underlies much of

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[19] We will use the term "consumer health psychology" to refer to these two research traditions (visceral influences and self-control). We are aware these two literatures do not exhaust consumer health psychology. Health risk perception is, for example, absent from our conceptualization and other themes would probably deserve our attention in a longer review. We nonetheless argue that this focus can produce crucial insights, as should be clear from our upcoming developments.

the self-regulation literature.[20] Second, this article is contemporary of Loewenstein's research on visceral influences. Given the numerous interactions between the two streams over the past two decades, it was interesting to set a shared time frame for our investigation.

In the next pages, we will highlight and develop the themes which structure consumer health psychology's discourses about the body and senses. In order to ensure both clarity and spread, we will focus on the most exemplar researches for each theme, but also try to highlight more subtle manifestations. Seminal works as well as recent literature reviews published by experts in the field will predominantly feed our analysis. While our review will focus on health-related issues and studies, we will occasionally refer to articles focusing on other types of self-destruction (e.g. financial, familial) if we believe such reference can facilitate understanding. We will rely on the anthropology, sociology, and philosophy of the body and senses to conceptualize these assumptions but also to put them back in a broader socio-historical context. Consumer health psychology is heavily indebted to social psychology, as well as economic theories. As such, we will occasionally trespass the strict boundaries of our discipline and consider works published in this field.

In this review, we will argue that consumer health psychology's research program and recommendations rest upon a specific symbolic construction of the body. We will start deconstructing this imaginary by discussing the dualist philosophy underlying the research stream's approach to the body (cf. I. The body in consumer health psychology: Symbolic framing). We will (1) highlight consumer health psychology's robust tendency to construe the body as a nefarious and bestial agent, responsible for consumers' unhealthy practices; and (2) discuss how this symbolic construction guides and justifies the research stream's approach to health issues. Our second section will criticize the obviousness of this construction (cf. II. Consumer health psychology as a political project). We will, notably, challenge the professed objectivity and political neutrality of the research stream; stressing the moral

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[20] In this review, we will use the terms self-regulation and self-control interchangeably. Some authors deplore this confusion but we believe the distinctions they establish do not challenge our reflections.

values underpinning its approach to the body. In the process, we will argue that consumer health psychology should be understood, not only as a philanthropic movement, but also as a strategic project aiming at its own reproduction. Our third and final section will define more specifically the content and motivations of consumer health psychology's corporeal ethics, and emphasize the social and individual dangers it involves. Taken together, these developments will allow us, as well as other political agents, to (1) better evaluate consumer health psychology's propositions and the trade-offs it implies, and (2) design more appropriate strategies to existing health issues, including noise-induced hearing loss.

I. The body in consumer health psychology: Symbolic framing

This section focuses on the objectifying and alienating discourse that characterizes consumer health psychology. Inheriting a long philosophical and scientific tradition, the research stream approaches the body as an object dissociated from the person it incarnates. This dissociation is not specific to the literature we investigate. Le Breton (2011 [1990]) presents it as a trait characterizing the modern Western thought. However, the relation the individual is expected to maintain with this body-object appears more specific. It builds a widespread dissociation into a confrontation the consumer should fight and win. In order to highlight and deconstruct this logic, we will first draw on Marzano's philosophy (Marzano 2007b) to expose the ambiguous nature of the human body. This detour will help us understand the objectification process at stake, its consequences, and cultural relativity. Building on this groundwork, we will define and discuss more specifically the status of this body-object in consumer health psychology (cf. B. Alienating the body), as well as psychologists' recommendation regarding its management and care (cf. C. From alienation to submission: Taming the body). This opening discussion is not a critique as much as an attempt to unearth the symbolic foundations underpinning the research stream's efficacies. Depicting and acknowledging these foundations should help to develop a more powerful, respectful, and constructive critique. Failure to do so would either lead to reject the psychological paradigm altogether, or risk producing maladapted and

unstable *bricolages* that would abruptly combine incommensurable conceptions.

A. A philosophical detour: The ambiguous status of the human body

Our theoretical introduction proposed that consumer health psychology approaches the body as a natural given, an obvious object usually left unquestioned; but to really understand and examine this proposition, it is first necessary to consider the body from a different perspective, to crack the frame that usually guides our modern reflections. Marzano's philosophy of the body (2007a, 2007b) offers a way to take some distance from a historically-rooted objectifying conception. Breaking with a long philosophical tradition, and building on phenomenology, Marzano (2007a) reminds "the ambiguous status of the human body" (p. 4). The body is simultaneously an object and a subject. As an object, we can distance ourselves from it and observe it from the outside. This objective nature is obvious in our relations to others. The other's body is alien to us. It has a distinct quality that differentiates it from "things" (e.g. chairs, trees), but we are not confounded with it. It is not me. If this objective nature is obvious when it comes to others, it is also relevant to our own body. As I watch my hand lying on my keyboard, I objectify a part of my body by separating it from the rest. "I" watch my "hand." I can act on it, apply some nail polish, or scratch it. Modern medical imaging illustrates and accentuates this possible detachment and objectification. An x-ray gives the opportunity to watch a representation of oneself from afar. The ghostly nature of the picture, the organic clustering it involves, and the access it gives to a normally invisible layer of the body reinforce the feeling of estrangement these imaging techniques create (Le Breton 2011 [1990]; p245).[21]

For Marzano and the philosophy she builds on, however, the body is not just an object. It is also a subject. One not only "has" a body, but also "is" a body. The person cannot fully and definitely escape it. Thinking the body as a subjective being is an arduous task. As soon as it is thought and written down, it becomes object of knowledge and observation. Phenomenological

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[21] See Le Breton (2011 [1990]) for a complete analysis of medical imaging's contribution to the modern, objective conception of the body.

philosophers have battled with the possibility to grasp the body's subjectivity since the 1960s (Benoist *in* Marzano 2007a, p244). Adding to this difficulty, the modern body is mostly silent. We tend to forget about it as we live our lives through learnt routines. It often takes extraordinary situations to remember that our body is not just a vessel, that life is an incarnated experience that cannot be thought away from the flesh. The most flagrant example Marzano takes is the distress that often follows organ transplants. Such surgical operations, even if they involve an invisible intrusion, frequently trigger complex and uncomfortable identity negotiation processes. Receiving someone else's liver or heart is welcoming the other at the most intimate level. The consumer might have desired and willingly accepted this intrusion, but it is, nonetheless, a threat to the person's being (Le Breton 2011 [1990]; Le Breton *in* Marzano 2007a, p417; Marzano 2007b).

It is no surprise this theme has been a fertile ground for literary horror, a genre best adapted to translating the surd and primal anguish associated with such otherness. Kenneth Branagh's cinematographic treatment of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein illustrates the endless quest for identity associated with an impossible corporeal unity (Branagh 1994). In a memorable scene, Frankenstein's creature confronts his maker with the existential question "Who am I?" The creature associates his different body parts with as many lingering memories and abilities. This identity patchwork forms a disconnected and disharmonious whole not reflected as much as incarnated by the creature's body. This simple but extreme illustration stresses that the body and organs cannot be reduced to simple commodities we can use, discard, trade, and transform. The person lives and is the flesh even, if this experience is often too obvious to be noticeable.

This brief introduction is meant to give our reader an intuition about a fundamental corporeal ambiguity.[22] The human body is simultaneously subject and object. As noted previously, one "has" and "is" a body; but this ambiguity is not universally recognized. In our next section, we will argue that consumer health psychology tends to objectify the body, to negate its subjective

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[22] Our empirical investigation will attempt, inter alia, to emphasize the crucial role of the subjective body in the consumption experience.

experience, and dissociate the actor from her or his flesh. This otherness and the relation to the body it implies are part of a rich symbolic imaginary that conditions the way consumer health psychology is conducted and valuated.[23]

B. Alienating the body

"Out of control: Visceral influences on behavior," Loewenstein's seminal decision theory article (Loewenstein 1996), offers an interesting starting point to paint the symbolic body consumer health psychology predominantly studies. It is the first research that attempts to breathe life into consumer decision models about health. It acknowledges that decisions are not purely rational but also depend on visceral influences or irrational corporeal drives.[24] Loewenstein's title brilliantly summarizes the research's premises. People often feel they are out of control, a loss attributed to visceral influences such as thirst, hunger, and sexual desire. This lack of control results in individuals acting against their perceived best-interest. Consumer health psychology's major goal is therefore to find a way to align behaviors with this perceived interest.

The very term, "loss of control," implies a fundamental dissociation. Something is supposed to command and something else to submit. There are two entities at play in consumer behavior, engaged in a struggle for control. Reading into Loewenstein's introduction, it becomes quite clear that these two actors are the mind (referred to as cognition or rational thinking) and the body (referred to as visceral influences or urges). The mind and body influence behavior in different and often contradictory ways. While rational thinking leads to optimal decisions that maximize self-interest, corporeal urges often trigger self-destructive behavioral patterns clearly detrimental to the individual. Loewenstein, therefore, presents his work as a response to Nisbett and Ross' despair over "their field's inability to bridge the gap between cognition and

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[23] We do not pay proper respect to Marzano's discussion of the body's ambiguity. Her point is that its objective and subjective dimensions cannot be disentangled. Building on Merleau-Ponty's and Levinas' phenomenologies, she presents ways to conceptualize and overcome this subject-object ambiguity. However, this added complexity is not yet necessary to the analysis of consumer health psychology. We, thus, opted to leave it out and spare our reader for the moment.

[24] Despite its initial publication in the management field, this article's core assumptions have fueled countless studies in marketing and consumer research. It therefore constitutes a relevant starting point for our reflections.

behavior, a gap that in our [their] opinion is the most serious failing of modern cognitive psychology" (Nisbett and Ross 1980 *in* Loewenstein 1996, p272). This detrimental "gap" that separates cognition and behavior is blamed on the body. Excessive visceral influences such as pain, hunger, drug-related cravings, sexual desire, but also moods and emotions cloud human judgment and prevent the consumer from acting in her or his best interest. Being out of control is ultimately yielding to the body.[25]

Recent reviews of the field tend to confirm this symbolic construction. Yang et al. (2012) propose to represent health-related consumer decision making using a hot-cold decision triangle.[26] This triangle builds a system of correspondence between temperature, decision types, and decisions' healthiness which we summarize in table 1. In their literature review, Yang et al. (2012) argue that cold, rational thinking leads to healthy decisions. Conversely, as the consumer enters hot states, visceral influences weigh on her or his judgment and lead to unhealthy decisions unless the body can be tricked or reasoned out. Such a trick can consist in pre-committing to a specific meal when one is satiated in order to avoid the tasty, easy, but fatty option when hunger strikes. As a provisional summary, the visceral influence literature thus

Table 1 – Decision theory system of correspondence

Temperature	Cold	Hot
Decision type	Reasoning	Visceral
Health	Healthy	Unhealthy

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[25] The somatic nature of moods and emotions would deserve some discussion. Decision theory often approaches them as psychological constructs. As such, while their grouping makes sense from an anthropological point of view (Mauss 1921), it is somewhat surprising to see Loewenstein define emotions as visceral influences. The fact that they are grouped with somatic experiences might reflect their opposition to cold, rational thinking rather than their corporeal dimension.

[26] We will make further references to Yang et al.'s paper in the next pages. This recent literature review was crafted by up-and-coming scholars as well as leading experts in the field. As such, we believe it can be considered a well-informed insider perspective on consumer health decision theory. Note that it also draws on the self-regulation literature although it is not the theoretical framework used.

seems to rest upon three major ideas: (1) the body and mind are dissociated, (2) cognitive control is instrumental to securing one's best-interest, and (3) excessive visceral influences are responsible for departures from strict rational thinking.

This dissociation is not exclusive to behavioral decision theory. The flourishing literature on self-regulation also presupposes an internal divorce, a regulator and a regulated, a controller and a controlled. Unlike behavioral decision theory, it does not directly pitch the body against the rational mind. The fundamental opposition in self-regulation theory is between desire and willpower (Hoch and Loewenstein 1996; Baumeister 2002). Desire includes, but is not restricted to, bodily urges. While cravings for cigarettes, food, and alcohol figure prominently in this literature, the individual is also expected to control her or his thoughts, emotions, and purchase impulses. The controlled is broader in scope. Faber and Vohs conceptual considerations about self-control (Faber and Vohs 2012, p468) cast additional light on the ideal alienation of the healthy consumer: "Executive functioning is so close to self-control that its definition often includes this phrase: 'freeing an organism from innate, hard-wired drives and reflexes, as well as from over-practiced, over-learned, and pre-potent responses' (Suchy 2009, p.106), which is precisely what self-control is said to do as well." This definition introduces a fourfold rupture. The person is separated from her or his organism (which he frees), her or his nature (innate and hard-wired), and her or his culture (practiced and learnt). This alienation is ontologically puzzling as it seems to deprive the person from its defining characteristics. What is the individual if it is neither a body nor a culture? Who is this "I" that self-regulates, decides on the standards to set, and monitors the unruly self?

For now, and given our conceptual focus, suffice to say that self-regulation theory, like behavioral decision science, clearly dissociates the body from the person it incarnates. The body, in this literature stream, is a dangerous object that needs to be controlled. The subjective body, meanwhile, disappears. The corporeal experience associated with food, alcohol, or drug consumption is mostly irrelevant to consumer health psychology. Only the destructive potential of cravings and bodily impulses remain.

C. From alienation to submission: Taming the body

Consumer health psychology meticulously dissociates the person from her or his body. This dissociation is not specific to the literature stream though. Le Breton (2011 [1990]) argues that it actually characterizes modern conceptions of the body. By modern, the anthropologist implies a conception based on philosophical, economic, and medical trends that have developed in Western Europe as well as in the United-States since the 16th century. According to Le Breton, Platonico-Cartesian philosophy, anatomo-physiologic medicine, as well as industrialization, and labor Taylorising have converged to mechanize the body. It progressively got conceptualized and managed as a machine that the mind should maintain, stir, and control. In the 1960s, the body liberation movement challenged this heritage, and started experimenting new types of relations to this corporeal other (Detrez 2002). This movement participated in a complex process, fueled by drastic cultural and technological evolutions, which resulted in a partial reconfiguration of our relations to the body. Le Breton (2011 [1990], 2012 [2002]) proposes that the body is now widely considered an *alter ego*, a partner or enemy depending on its compliance with one's self-conception.

Note that the body-as-machine and body-as-alter-ego are two conceptions that imply different health-related questions and recommendations. The machine's health, or rather proper functioning, is related to its ability to perform physical tasks regularly, precisely, and at the right intensity (Guéry et Deleule 1973). It is closely related to its proper action. In the case of the body-as-alter-ego, health is a concept that exceeds action and extends to appearance. The healthy body does not only work well, it also reflects properly what the person considers to be. For health, the transition from one symbolic system to the other marks a passage from well-being to well-appearing (Le Breton 2011 [1990]).

This brief historical perspective is meant to emphasize that the relation to the body, its modalities, objectives, and proper management are not fixed. They have transformed historically and it is safe to assume that variations can be found across disciplines and cultural contexts. Understanding the specific

relation assumed by consumer health psychology appears necessary to understand its logic and illuminate the blind spots it might miss regarding self-destructive practices.

1. A vicious beast

Consumption psychologists seem to advocate a strict defiance towards this corporeal other. The body should not be trusted. Our previous section (cf. B. Alienating the body) highlighted the nefarious influences assigned to corporeal urges. The body works against the person's best interest. It lures the individual into consuming tasty and fatty foods or alcohol. Yang et al. (2012, p6) compare visceral urges to being under a spell. Khan, Dhar, and Wertenbroch (2004, p10), following a tradition that can be traced back to Ainslie's influential paper on impulse control (Ainslie 1975), present self-regulation dilemmas as fights against Ulysses' sirens. The figures of the witch and siren literally manifest the symbolic status of a seductive but, ultimately, destructive body. Hoch and Loewenstein's seminal self-control article highlights another trick of the body (Hoch and Loewenstein 1991). It hides. Bodily urges are impossible to assess from afar. It is only when the consumer faces them that she or he realizes he has no control over them. A satiated consumer will systematically under-evaluate the urge to indulge in unhealthy food until hunger strikes.

This defiance is also reflected in the role attributed to senses and perceptions across literature streams. Senses are either the door through which temptation enters or a distorting glass that tricks the individual into consuming more. The heightened sensations experienced during compulsive episodes supposedly block the thoughts that would normally result in restraint (O'Guinn and Faber 1989; Faber and Vohs 2012). Hoch and Loewenstein (1991) further underline the detrimental influence of sensory proximity. Intense smells, sights, and textures can cloud judgment and get consumers to prefer sub-optimal immediate rewards (smoking or indulging in unhealthy food) over long-term optimal ones (staying healthy). The defiance towards senses in Western societies is not new. We can find its roots in Platonico-Cartesian philosophy. For Descartes, senses cannot be relied upon to access knowledge.

Only reason can be. However, while the Cartesian analogy describes the body as an extraordinary machine, consumer health psychology appears to approach it as a deviant trickster that needs to be kept at bay, reasoned out or outsmarted.

2. Muzzling the animal within

The techniques and good practices consumer health psychologists recommend further stress this defiance, but also inform us about the nature of the beast and the form the fight should take. Yang et al. (2012) offer an interesting and thorough summary of these methods. First, the consumer should stay away from visceral urges or hot-states. This implies avoiding visual, olfactory, or tactile temptations in order to take decisions rationally. This distance can be physical or temporal (Hoch and Loewenstein 1991). The individual can, for example, pre-commit to certain types of action before the self-destructive urges are too strong. She or he might for example choose what to have for lunch right after breakfast, when she or he is satiated.[27] The consumer should thus muzzle the body to let careful planning dictate consumption choices.

Even when the body is silent, however, consumers do not necessarily act rationally. They regularly base their choices on heuristics, simple decisional rules that do not require extensive considerations of the choice set. Particularly interesting to us is Yang et al.'s discussion of external cues. The authors explain that consumers often base their consumption on non-physiological cues such as package sizes (Wansink 1996), kitchenware dimensions (Wansink 2010), or the form of a glass (Wansink and Van Ittersum 2003). A consumer will for example eat more from a large package of chips than from a small one, using the package size as a guide to define the proper quantity to consume. Reflecting on these results, Yang et al. (2012) deplore consumers' inability to pay attention to physiological cues, to recognize satiation when it strikes. It is ironic to read this comment only a couple of paragraphs away from a diatribe solemnly condemning the body's nefarious influence. The consumer is, indeed, caught in the middle, supposed to listen to a body presented as unreliable and deceitful.

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[27] We will come back to the importance of distance in the consumer health psychology (see B. The detachment logic).

Their review quickly clears out this dilemma, though. Yang et al.'s recommendations insist on two areas. Practically, Yang et al. (2012) raise the opportunity to modify the external references consumers base their inferences on, to work on package sizes, cafeteria layouts, and glass shapes, for example. Conceptually, they propose to investigate how these external referents interact with different psychological variables. As such, the way out is not to help consumers listen to physiological cues, let alone to get them to abandon control over their body, but rather to use their perceptual limitations in their best interest. If the body cannot be entirely silenced or banished, it can be outsmarted by scientifically designed methods.[28]

This attempt to trick the body is also found in Yang et al.'s discussion of the blue area of cold reasoning. Consumers who adopt this decision system are "better at considering long-term self-interests, scrutinizing consequences of short-term gratification, and reducing myopic tendencies" (Yang et al. 2012, p13). They are able to reason out their corporeal sensations. This system, however, is resource-demanding; and these resources must sometimes be replenished, for example at the end of an effortful working day. To help people recharge their "blue batteries" (p15), Yang and his colleagues mention the possibility to use "tweaked" reward stimuli that would allow fulfilling the license earned through previous efforts without impairing health. The tweaked stimulus (such as a brief comedy video) could be presented to the consumer before making any health impacting decision (such as ordering foods or drinks). In this example, the affective gratification is expected to defuse corporeal urges. The body is again tricked and silenced by a scientifically engineered stimulus.

3. Controlling corporeal pleasures

While this confrontational relation to the body seems to dominate consumer health psychology, some researchers have approached self-control issues from a different perspective. Kivetz and Simonson (2002) look at occasions when consumers pre-commit to hedonic pleasures. For example, after answering an

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[28] Yang and his colleagues mention other heuristics including how the information is framed as well as consumers' habits. We will come back to these dimensions at a later point.

unrelated survey, some female consumers had to choose between two prizes they could win in a future raffle: ""[…]a 1-hour pampering massage (maximum retail value = $80) at a premium day spa at a location of your choice" and "$85 in cash (you decide how to spend the money – for example, at the supermarket, gas station, or at a premium day spa at a location of your choice)"" (p11). Economic theory would traditionally predict that consumers prefer the $85 dollar cash prize. It has a superior and more flexible monetary value (that can be used, inter alia, to buy an entry to the Spa. However, some consumers prefer to commit to indulgence by choosing the pampering massage formula.[29] Kivetz and Simonson (2002), therefore, consider cases when consumers enforce self-control techniques to guarantee corporeal and sometimes unhealthy pleasures (one reward is an exquisite bottle of Burgundy wine).

This approach partly runs against the large corpus of literature it emerged from. The body, in this research, is recognized for its ability to provide pleasure and is given an opportunity to be felt, instead of being feared and silenced. Kivetz and Simon frame the body, not as a nefarious agent, but rather as a source of pleasure. From this perspective, their work contrasts quite clearly the literature we have reviewed so far. Upon further inspection, however, their article reproduces some core assumptions of consumer health psychology regarding the body. The corporeal experience they discuss stays dissociated from the person. The consumer is not expected to silence the body anymore, but nonetheless decides when it will express itself. Alienation and control stay central to the self/body relation in Kivetz and Simonson's work. We will leave this discussion pending for the moment. This brief introduction is meant to stress that, although rare, some alternatives conceptualizations of self-control issues exist in the psychology literature. We will make sure to assess the significance of this rupture, but not before we discuss in more depth the moral underpinnings of consumer health psychology.

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[29] The assumption underlying Simonson and Kivetz' study is that enjoying luxuries tends to be morally condemned and triggers feelings of guilt. As such, consumers often have difficulties to indulge. Conscious about this tendency to under-consume luxuries, some consumers try to pre-commit to pleasurable experiences.

D. Beyond philanthropy

Staying healthy is a confrontation that opposes the person to her or his body. This basic premise appears to feed consumer health psychology. In this perspective, researchers and the body are engaged in a fight to outsmart each other. The person is not even that relevant in some cases. Thaler and Sunstein (2009) suggest using choice architecture to *nudge* "the least sophisticated people" into choosing the good option when it comes to difficult decisions (p79). To protect consumers, the authors argue that it is sometimes necessary to deprive them of their own free will. This symbolic construction is efficient. Countless articles, including studies in naturalistic settings, have demonstrated that framing consumption choices carefully can curb self-destructive behaviors. We acknowledge these successes. This efficiency should not, however, preclude scrutinizing the trade-offs this symbolic construction implies.

Consumer health psychology does not leave much space for trade-offs, though. It presents its recommendations, and the symbolic imaginary that supports it, as the only sensible answer to the issues it addresses. Benefiting from self-granted neutrality and objectivity, rooted in a long historical tradition we will address shortly, the research stream does not claim to offer the best solutions to current health issues as much as the only ones. A full evaluation and critique of the research stream will, therefore, first require challenging this claim to objectivity. Stripping consumer health psychology from its absolute scientific authority will also be necessary to think alternative strategies to the ones currently enforced. Our next section will proceed with this task. Building on Foucault's archeological method (Foucault 1972 [1964]), we will argue that consumer health psychology is, in fact, a political project. The centrality of the body in its symbolic imaginary makes this political potential all the more acute. We will therefore suggest that the research stream should not be approached solely as a philanthropic movement, but also as a strategic endeavor enforcing an often implicit, but nonetheless powerful, social project.

II. Consumer health psychology as a political project

Back in 2012, debates over circumcision swept Germany. Mixing religious and medical stakes, heated discussions over the practice and its prohibition forcefully manifested the symbolic value of the body, of its use, and alteration (Le Bars *in* Le Monde, September 15th 2012). A federal tribunal questioned the religious custom of circumcision based on children's right to physical integrity. How to arbitrate a conflict between two fundamental values, religious freedom on one hand and physical safety on the other? Participants in this debate used the body as a symbolic battleground, both the place and the stake of a struggle with society-defining implications; including the state-church relations and the definition of freedom. This brief example is not isolated, and a large corpus of literature, which we will review shortly, has argued that the shape, management, and experience of the body have historically crystallized political stakes and ethical recommendations.

The centrality of the body in consumer health psychology, therefore, entices to consider the political potential of the research stream, to approach it not as an objective and neutral observer but as a self-interested actor. We will now introduce and discuss two well-established, and to some degree interrelated, streams of philosophical and anthropological research which support this interpretation. The first stream (cf. A. Consumer health psychology's relative objectivity), heralded by Michel Foucault, argues that psychological and psychiatric disciplines should be understood as strategic constructions, which aim at the reinforcement of their legitimacy and power positions in specific socio-cultural contexts (Foucault 1972). The second stream, often labeled body culture studies, discusses, among other things, how the body, its shape, experience, and use, crystallize moral prescriptions, acting as a leverage in the enforcement of specific political projects. After introducing these theories, we will direct our attention to the moralist manifestations which dot discourses and practices in consumer health psychology (cf. B. The moral body). Taken together, these two approaches will contribute to challenge the objectivity and political neutrality which has come to characterize the psychological tradition.

A. Consumer health psychology's relative objectivity

We propose to approach consumer health psychology as a social force conveying values which are, by definition, not neutral. However, this research stream's reliance on psychological science complicates the task. By inheriting psychological science methods, theories, and positivist epistemology, consumer health psychology also inherited a claim to objectivity. It supposedly describes and explains behaviors as they are. Its methodology opens a window through which the scientist peers into human nature and directly access the universal principles underlying behavior. Consumer health psychology presents itself as a neutral science that tells the truth (and not "a" truth) about the human condition. Every internal criticism, every new moderating effect, or theoretical refinement adds a new stone to this edifice of truth. This objectivity does not preclude heated debates among researchers. Disconfirmation is at the heart of the positivist paradigm; but these debates all converge towards an objective and universal certainty that only psychology's neutrality can guarantee.

It took Foucault's philosophical archeology and word power to shake the objective foundations of psychology. In *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason*, Foucault deconstructs psychology's and psychiatry's claim to objective truth (Foucault 1972 [1964]; Garo 2011). Reflecting on the status and treatment of madness throughout the ages (more specifically from the 16th to 19th century), Foucault stresses that the "objective" definition of madness is better appreciated as a strategic construction. By defining madness in relation to reason (as "unreason" specifically), empiricist psychology gives itself the opportunity to understand, explain, and treat the affliction. It creates an object it can deal with. In other words, psychology and psychiatry create the conditions necessary to their existence. In this perspective, the alienation, stigmatization, and internment inherent to psychiatry do not cure madness as much as they define it. Psychiatry does not trigger pathological symptoms. However, by deciding who is interned, it separates the mad from the normal. It is the exclusion process that defines

madness.[30] Simultaneously, Foucault underlines the definition relativity by approaching madness as an ontologically independent reality (i.e. not defined in relation to reason). Ultimately, his monumental work carefully deconstructs a supposedly universal and objective definition of madness. It invites us to consider psychological theories in relation to the social, historical, and cultural contexts they emerged from; and that the Western man it predominantly studies should be addressed "not as a nature progressively revealing itself to knowledge, but as the combined product of a history and the different types of knowledge that meet in institutions" (Garo 2011, p95).[31]

The centrality of the body in consumer health psychology further stresses the need to consider the cultural relativity and political potential of the research stream. The body, its use, care, and regulation have historically crystallized moral prescriptions (Foucault 1984). It is a "symbolic surface" marked by society and expressing it at the same time (Le Breton 2011 [1990]). As such, hygiene, as well as health practices and policies, have been privileged ways to support and perform specific social projects. By defining the healthy body, they simultaneously reflect and transform society. Building on Foucault's, Vigarello's, and Schlanger's researches, Detrez (2002), for example, points out that the effort to rectify morality is not only reflected but also achieved through microphysics of power aimed at corporeal rectitude (Foucault 1975; Vigarello 2004 [1978]). The physical constraints which shape the body, its stance, and use simultaneously shape the individual's values. Disciplinary institutions, such as schools, the army, the factory, or the asylum, play an important role in this process. The rigid moral and corporeal scripts these institutions enforce conjointly regulate bodily experiences and inculcate social norms. As a result, these rules become incarnated. They are not just known, but lived in the flesh, applied as natural evidences. Consumer health psychology lacks the physicality of disciplinary institutions. However, its impact on social policies, media, education, and legal frameworks ultimately

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[30] When we write that internment creates madness, it is on a social and cultural rather than on a psychiatric level, although both levels are intertwined.
[31] "[...] Foucault tient sa promesse d'aborder la construction de l'homme occidental, non comme nature se révélant peu à peu à la connaissance, mais comme produit combiné d'une histoire et des savoirs qui se croisent dans des institutions."

bears on what constitute proper relations to the body and invites to consider its far-reaching implications.

B. The moral body

Stripping consumer health psychology from its unquestioned objectivity and neutrality makes possible and necessary its re-contextualization. We can and must question and asses its influence on society's functioning and definition; but how and where can we begin to deconstruct this dogma? What contextual element can we anchor our reflection on? As a departure point, we propose to focus on the moralizing discourse that pervades consumer health psychology. Three considerations drove this choice. First, it is convenient. As discussed next, this discourse is widespread and manifest in the literature. It surfaces quite obviously, not to say candidly, in a research stream that categorically confronts good and bad choices, health and pleasure, vices and virtues. Second, we will shortly argue that social and ethical norms cannot be separated from the broader political, economic, and cultural system they belong to. As such, discussing the stream's moral connotations will necessarily lead us to address other ecological dimensions that will help to re-contextualize consumer health psychology's discourse. Finally, as argued in our previous section, the body, its use, care, and regulation have historically crystallized moral prescriptions (Foucault 1984). The ethical perspective therefore appears as a powerful way to start thinking the psychologist body in relation to its social, political, economic, and cultural environment.

The moralizing dimension of consumer health psychology is not hidden. It is out in the open. A preliminary look at seminal and recent research titles helps to establish this idea: *Consumption self-control by rationing purchase quantities of virtue and vice* (Wertenbroch 1998), *Yielding to temptation: Self-control failure, impulsive purchasing, and consumer behavior* (Baumeister 2002), *Mixing virtue and vice: Combining the immediacy effect and the diversification heuristic* (Read, Loewenstein, and Kalyanaraman 1999), *The role of Consumer self-control in the consumption of virtue products* (Ein-Gar, Goldenberg, and Sagiv 2012), or *License to sin: Self-licensing as a mechanism underlying hedonic consumption* (Witt Huberts, Evers, and De

Ridder 2011). And the list could go on and on. Countless articles refer to temptation, vices and virtues, and even sin to frame the practical and conceptual issues they tackle. This framing is particularly manifest and frequent in the self-regulation literature where successful self-control usually consists in preferring the virtuous to the vicious alternative (Sela, Berger and Liu 2008, Jain 2011).

It is probably Baumeister, an influential and prominent author in the self-regulation literature, who most consistently and clearly framed self-control as a moral duty. The introduction to his book *Losing control: How and why people fail at self-regulation* (Baumeister, Heatherton, and Tice 1994) is a good illustration. The first argument supporting self-regulation paramount importance is its historical roots (p10). Baumeister and his colleagues draw on Aristotelian philosophy and Christian ethics to stress the need to self-regulate more efficiently. They remind the reader that five of the seven deadly sins can be interpreted as self-control failures (i.e. greed, lust, gluttony, sloth, and anger). These references and the authors' general retrospective anchor their research on self-discipline in a long intellectual and moral tradition that mortifies the body and strictly codes its practices. The Church condemnation of these sins is sufficient to motivate more research about their inner mechanism. This argument places the Church, an eminently moral institution, in a position of authority apt to decide how to behave and what to research. The eschatological framing of self-regulation issues echoes, on a larger scale, this religious connotation, on a larger scale. In an ominous attempt to justify their work, Baumeister and his colleagues warn us: "Self-regulation failure is central to many of the problems that are widely discussed and bemoaned as allegedly hastening the decline and doom of America" (p3).

Leaving aside the obvious religious subtext, the consumption choices Baumeister deals with still appear as moral decisions. The first sentence introducing his seminal reflection on self-control sets the stage: "The shopper says, 'I really shouldn't,' transfixed with infatuated desire" (Baumeister 2002, p670). Baumeister's interest is in consumers' ability to accomplish what they "should" do, to consume how they ought to consume. He pitches this duty against an "infatuated desire" which will ultimately harm the individual and

others. Failing to overcome this desire is a personal and moral failure: "Returning home with an unnecessary and expensive purchase, the buyer probably would rather explain to the disapproving spouse that 'I couldn't resist' than 'I was too lazy and selfish to resist'" (Baumeister 2002, p671). Our reader will notice how fast Christian ethics crept backed in the discourse considering laziness proximity to sloth, and selfishness kinship with greed. There are many other cues that manifest Baumeister's profoundly moral psychology. We will come back to them when we address the content and form of consumer health psychology ethics. For now, we would like to stress manifestations that can be found in researches outside the self-regulation paradigm.

It is interesting to note that despite its apparently detached and almost "clinical" approach, Loewenstein's 1996 article on visceral influences (Loewenstein 1996) is not entirely free from moral undertones. Consider the following statement meant to recognize the need for visceral influences: "It makes good sense to eat when hungry, to have sex when amorous, and to take pain killers when in pain. However, many classic patterns of self-destructive behavior, such as overeating, sexual misconduct, substance abuse, and crimes of passion, seem to reflect an *excessive* [sic] influence of visceral factors on behavior" (Loewenstein 1996, p273). The link he establishes between being amorous and having sex hints towards the moral preconceptions that guide his analysis. Would it still "make good sense" to have sex with multiple strangers in a parking lot just for the corporeal pleasure it gives? Would it be considered a "sexual misconduct"? And, why should having sex make sense in the first place? In an attempt to avoid hasty conclusions, we might consider this quote as a clumsy introduction to an otherwise ethically neutral research. The author's trajectory, however, further emphasizes the moral motivation that fuels his research. In collaboration with Dan Ariely, another major figure of consumer health and well-being psychology, Loewenstein proceeded to study sexual decision making (Ariely and Loewenstein 2006). Among other things, his experimental design aimed at evaluating the effect of arousal on individuals' willingness to engage in "morally questionable behavior in order to obtain sexual gratification" (p87). The participants, undergraduate students,

Figure 1 – Ariely and Loewenstein's list of immoral sexual conducts

Table 3. Mean response, standard deviations, and differences for the different questions on the likelihood to engage in immoral "date-rape" like behaviors (a strict order of severity is not implied)

Question	Non-aroused	Aroused	Difference	$p\ [t\ (23)]$
Would you take a date to a fancy restaurant to increase your chance of having sex with her?	55 (5.86)	70 (3.83)	15	0.01
Would you tell a woman that you loved her to increase the chance that she would have sex with you?	30 (5.40)	51 (4.54)	21	0.001
Would you encourage your date to drink to increase the chance that she would have sex with you?	46 (5.80)	63 (2.87)	17	<0.005
Would you keep trying to have sex after your date says "no."	20 (4.32)	45 (3.44)	25	<0.001
Would you slip a woman a drug to increase the chance that she would have sex with you?	5 (2.51)	26 (3.65)	21	<0.001

Note: Each question was presented on a visual-analog scale that stretched between "no" on the left (0) to "possibly" in the middle (50) to "yes" on the right (100).

were asked to masturbate until they achieved a sub-climatic arousal level. They then had to answer a questionnaire including their likelihood to engage in "immoral "date-rape" like behaviors" (p94, list of behaviors included in Figure 1).[32] There are various issues with this research. The most obvious one is that these behaviors' immorality is not entirely clear. Is inviting a woman to dinner hoping to have sex immoral? There is a good chance the guest imagines where the night might lead; and we dare hoping countless sex-motivated invitations to dinner do not end up as date rapes either. Trading an "I love you" for sex is certainly questionable in a culture idealizing romantic relationships; but so is having teenagers masturbate for 10 to 30 dollars, even in the name of science. Arguing about these behaviors morality or immorality is, regardless, irrelevant to our objective. What is more important is that, through this paper, Ariely and Loewenstein decide that individuals' morality is a legitimate research subject. Understanding when and how people deviate from an untold, but generally accepted rule becomes an academic objective. As noted previously, this stance is problematic considering consumer health psychology's non-reflexivity and position of "objective" authority. Ariely and Loewenstein do not consider necessary to define on what grounds these behaviors could be defined as immoral. They concentrate powers as they arbitrarily impose the rules to live by and judge behaviors according to them. Their public fame finally gives them opportunities to "carry the sentence" by stigmatizing abnormal behaviors, a mechanism of social exclusion sometimes as efficient as the physical

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[32] The research obviously did not present these behaviors as "date-rape" like. The authors proposed this formulation to regroup the items they had used.

isolation imprisonment constitutes. [33] Let it be clear that what we deplore is not research on morality. It is rather the dangerous combination of moral and scientific authorities.

Consumer health psychology, therefore, appears infused with moral considerations. So far however, our analysis has not "fleshed out" consumer health ethics. It does not capture its guiding principles. What does make a behavior morally condemnable? It is tempting to see these moral considerations and proto-prescriptions as reflections of American puritanism. Baumeister, Heatherton, and Tice (1994) reference to the deadly sins and the corporeal mortification inherent to consumer health psychology blend nicely in such an interpretation. It is also notable that Ariely and Loewenstein do not consider women as desiring subjects. [34] While their article claims to investigate "The effect of sexual arousal on sexual decision making" (p87), it actually considers *masculine* sexual arousal and decision making. The woman is framed as a target, a passive object, the victim of men's desire. There is no room for desiring and powerful women in the authors' study. And when the authors finally address women's desire as a boundary condition in their discussion section, it is described as less intense and more compromising than men's arousal. This "lesser" quality defines women's in relation to men's desire instead of acknowledging its ontological quality. This negation of women's sexual desire, characteristic of a paternalistic society, can also be seen as an attempt to silence the tempting Eve that damns men. Reifying women is a powerful way to strip them from the carnal and almost mystic seductive power they incarnate.

However, reducing consumer health psychology ethics to a puritan refraction would fail to acknowledge the breadth and depth of its project. While it is important to acknowledge this heritage, we argue that it should not conceal the much more contemporary ethics of production and consumption we will discuss in the next sections. Our detour through Foucaldian philosophy of knowledge, as well as body culture studies, only cracks the shell of

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[33] Dan Ariely is a best-selling author and a public speaker regularly invited to talk about his research (e.g. at TED conferences).

[34] Thanks go to Anne Laure Colas Charlap who brought this point to our attention.

consumer health psychology. It gives us keys to understand its political significance. Some Foucaldian concepts and theories are very much relevant to our topic. It is, for example, difficult not to draw a parallel between Foucault's incarnated discipline and the notions of self-regulation and self-control.[35] We will also argue that the relation he establishes between knowledge and power structures can explain the difficulties to think and apply original health research frameworks. However, we should not overlook the specificities of consumer health psychology's program in the 21st century. Foucault incites to consider the historical conditions from which consumer health psychology's truths emerged, to address the research stream not as a mere continuation of the psychiatric project, but as a historically situated intellectual undertaking.

III. The cult of control

What is a suitable relation to the body and self? Why is it not only unhealthy, but also immoral to mismanage one's body? We have seen that consumer health psychology assumes, and to some degree advocates, dissociating the body from the person it incarnates. It strongly encourages consumers to tame their unruly body and morally condemns failures to act accordingly; but what ethical principles underlie this cult of control? And what are the implications of such moral prescriptions for the individual and society? Our next sections address on these issues.

Putting consumer health psychology back in its broader historical, political, and socio-cultural context, we will argue that this cult of control can be decomposed in to two complementary logics. It, first, comprises a "cult of performance" which, according to Ehrenberg (1991), characterizes consumption and communication societies. The right relation to the body should be a relation of strict control because control participates in the maximization of performance at the individual and social level, and performance itself is a positive and central moral value in modern and post-modern societies. We will argue that this ethics, including its corporeal dimension, takes its roots in the industrial revolution, but evolved, since, to

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[35] The two concepts are sometimes compared to "self-discipline," a parent notion (Faber and Vohs 2012, p 468).

accommodate the constraints of new economies (cf. A. The performance logic). The right relation to the body should also be detached (cf. B. The detachment logic), an idea we introduced in our section B. Alienating the body. We will suggest that this complementary detachment or compartmentalization logic participates in an effort to mechanize the body, as well as the desire it incarnates, and curb their chaotic and disruptive movement (Duclos 2004). We will argue that the way consumer health psychology frames the body can be related to the American society's difficulty to acknowledge and negotiate its desire for violence. While researchers have stressed these logics' contributions to well-being, their potential downsides remain to be recognized and taken into account. We will therefore focus our developments on the potential perverse effects the performance and detachment logics imply at the social and individual level.

A. The performance logic

Despite his attempt to "breathe more life into decision models" (Loewenstein 1996, p289), Loewenstein remains faithful to an economic rhetoric of optimality and utility maximization. He acknowledges visceral and emotional influences on behaviors and stresses the need to model these departures from strictly rational decision-making; but he also motivates this endeavor by remarking visceral consumption's sub-optimality. Visceral influences are accepted as long as the consumer can manage them in a "relatively optimal fashion" (p273). They serve the individual's interest when they stay under acceptable levels; but they can also "produce distinctly suboptimal patterns of behavior at higher levels" (p275). While the economic vocabulary has become more discrete in this research stream (i.e. optimality and utility maximization are more rarely referred to), its researchers' objective is still frequently to "improve health-related decision-making" (Yang et al. 2012, p3) and help consumers to take better decisions.

The self-regulation literature also manifests this performance rhetoric. Paraphrasing Baumeister's title (Baumeister 2002, p670): yielding to temptation is failing at self-control. A simple reversal suggests that staying healthy is succeeding at self-control. Success comes at a price, however. The

consumer must exert willpower to overcome her or his destructive desire. The self-control literature sometimes compares the ability to self-regulate to a muscle (Baumeister and Heatherton 1996, Faber and Vohs 2012, p469). It can be trained and grow stronger, but also get strained by effort. Pushing the analogy a step further, we can compare living a regulated life to a sport, where performance is sanctioned by health and well-being. By repeatedly exerting self-control, the individual nurtures her or his ability to perform better on subsequent self-control tasks and live a healthier life.

Two major streams of consumer health psychology, therefore, invite and help the consumer to better perform at life. Performance is, *in fine,* a more pervasive and better established theme than health itself in these research streams. Over time, the self-regulation and visceral influence literatures have progressively extended their reach over new domains and their object might now be better understood as welfare rather than health. Nonetheless while consumption contexts and goals might differ from one research to another (e.g. staying fit, avoiding bankruptcy, avoiding procrastination, avoiding immoral sexual behaviors), ever extending the domain of health from physiological equilibrium to forms of financial, mental, and moral health, the rhetoric of performance is stable. It is the cement that brings these domains together. This insistence on successful control, this pressure to perform in an increasing number of domains and situations raises a question. Is performance still instrumental to health? Is it necessary to perform to stay healthy? Or should one be healthy to better perform? [36] In the next section, we will argue that the roots of such a reversal can be found in the late 18th century in France, when emerged a new collusion between economic and public health stakes, tying the rise of Bourgeois ethics and industrial revolution.[37] We realize this brief historical detour might temporarily divert us from our focal question.

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[36] Such conception would bring self-regulation closer to body-building than any other sport. In body building, the muscle gets valued for its own sake and not for its ability to jump higher, run faster, or fight longer. The muscle and performance are confounded. Remarkably, on the day we wrote this note (December 12th 2013), "www.bodybuilding.com," a popular website for work out adepts, welcome his visitors with a banner inviting them to "Become your best self," stressing the transforming value of the activity (see Appendi).

[37] Although we anchor our reflection in the French context, the reach of the industrial revolution should make these reflections relevant to other cultural contexts, notably in Western Europe and the United-States.

However, we would like to assure our reader that it will ultimately cast light on consumer health psychology's relation to the body.

1. The productive body

The industrial revolution marked a turning point in the management of public health. To some extent, the very idea of public health policies emerged following this revolution. While peasants' health had been left to the good care of popular wisdom, the hygienist movement started carefully managing proletarians' corporeal practices (Vigarello 1985, pp82-84). It launched vast surveys to assess and better remedy poor health conditions, combining town-planning and new medical practices to improve the population's fitness. In the meanwhile, social policies aimed at moral rectitude completed the measures guaranteeing cleanliness (Foucault 1975, Vigarello 2004 [1978]). We have already mentioned how disciplinary institutions, such as school, the army, or prison, combined moral and physical prescription to incarnate dominant moral systems (II. Consumer health psychology). New health norms contributed to a broader movement aimed at producing a disciplined and fit workforce. Reflecting on this movement, Detrez (2002) clearly stresses the ties linking health to economic activity: "For that matter, the ultimate goal of improving the worker's health is to increase his productivity" (p176).[38]

If the Bourgeois sudden interest in lower classes' health is not sufficient to support this idea, hygienists' disinterest in "industrial pathologies" might further support this claim. Marx uses this expression to designate the "crippling of body and mind" inseparable from the division of labor (*Le capital*, Vol. 1, Chapter 14, section 5, Marx 1995 [1867]).[39] With industrialization and factory work emerged new physical deformities, pains, and illnesses. As the body got "instrumentalized" in the production process, it also got warped, twisted, and bent. It was expected to adapt to the machine, its rhythm, and own "mechanic anatomy," forcing the worker to adopt unusual and ultimately destructives stances. While hygienists drastically remodeled the city as well as social and domestic practices to ensure the French population

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[38] « Le but ultime de l'amélioration de la santé du travailleur est d'ailleurs d'accroître sa productivité. »

[39] Accessed online: http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch14.htm

health, they stayed remarkably silent on these new work-related infirmities. This silence and inaction contribute to debunk a purely philanthropist interpretation. 19th century health policies appear inseparable from the capitalist logic of growth, accumulation, and performance that, at least in part, motivates them.

Getting one thematic and chronological step closer to our issue, it is important to note that social psychology has been an active participant in this effort to increase workers' productivity. Contributing to the Marxist intellectual tradition, Guéry and Deleule (1973) stressed how the hypertrophied productive body has been submitting the social and biological bodies since the mid-19th century. Specifically, Deleule (*in* Guéry et Deleule 1973, pp 55-103) argues that constructing the productive body required deconstructing or rather parceling out the biological body. The productive action had to be extracted from the living subject to be located in the isolated gesture. The living had to be excluded from the productive process, or at least its contribution reduced to a minimum. Deleule proceeds by stressing how social psychology, through its assumptions, methods, and the substantial issues it addresses, has participated in this exclusion process. The assumption of, and focus on, a human irreducible homogeneity, for example, contributes to this mechanization of the living. It erases the differences that give humans their specificities and subjectivities. Social psychology standardized behaviors, carrying the Fordist project on a much larger scale. The person disappears as people become exchangeable parts of the productive body. Experimental participants who deviate too much from these standards become outliers; and the subjectivity that explains deviations becomes a simple artifact, tolerated as long as it stays within acceptable boundaries.

Reflecting on the early 1900s, Deleule highlights how social psychology progressively explored and, finally, colonized the body. The research stream meticulously mapped the body's reactions to stimuli, deciphering and learning to predict sensations and reactions to pressure, pain, electricity, vibrations, speed, and other mechanic stimulations. Social psychologists conceptualized the body as a predictable chart. They took a notable interest in the speed and automaticity of workers' reactions. For

Deleule, it is the productive imperative that dictated this temporal focus. As reaction times get shorter, the productive cadence and production of relative surplus value can increase. When the human is the weakest link in the chain of production, getting workers to react faster becomes the most effective way to increase the productive process profitability. In sum, psychological science worked to create a more predictable, reliable, replaceable, and efficient worker that would fit in the productive body. In the process, it fragmented the body, stripped it from its subjectivity, and reduced it to a simple mechanical function. As such, social psychology is not just an effect or reflection of capitalist modes of production. It is a part of the social machinery, an "uninterrupted intervention" (Deleule *in* Guéry et Deleule 1973, p77) which disciplines and folds the biological body.

Extending this argument to consumer health psychology might meet two important objections. First, reaction time measures in consumer psychology are not as frequent as they used to be. Researchers have predominantly abandoned the stimulus-response framework and opened the black box to focus on processes. Consumer psychology introduced a qualitative dimension in its research agenda, adding "how?" and "why?" to an investigative repertoire that previously focused mostly on "how much?" At first sight, asking "why," i.e. probing the worker's motivation, is irrelevant to the accomplishment of a mechanic action. Moreover, as previously argued, consumer health psychology focuses on the mind or will as much as it does on the body. The body does not seem to be as central in contemporary psychology as it was in the first half of the 20th century. These manifest transformations should not conceal a stable underlying continuity, however. Focusing on stimulus-response models and the living mechanization made sense in an industrial economy; but the expansion of the tertiary sector has transformed the productive body. It does not need hands as much as voices. Reaction times and dexterity are not as important as enthusiasm and relational ease. The worker should still be predictable, reliable, replaceable, and efficient, but according to new criteria. Emotional self-control is the key in a relation-based economy.

Through its work on physiological health and fitness, psychology has also extended its reach from the being to the appearing. The body should not

only perform well, it should also look good. Seeing obesity issues capturing so much attention in consumer health psychology raises the question: are health consequences the real problem? Or is it obesity's anti-sociality? Obese workers are maladapted to a communication society that builds its growth on smooth human interactions and communications (Ehrenberg 1991). Their abnormality disturbs the strictly coded routine of relational production and consumption, slowing the productive body in its conquering movement. For Le Breton (2012 [2002], pp58-60), the ritualistic deletion of the body characterizes modern societies. This deletion is possible as long as the other's body mirrors ours. However, this mirroring process requires mastering and respecting strict corporeal norms that guarantee the identity of bodies.[40] When handicap, or obesity in our case, breaks the corporeal consensus, the mirror is deformed, returning a grotesque image. The body resurfaces and hinders communication and the consensual consumption of signs that depends on it. Consumer health psychology, therefore, carries on its mechanization process. It pursues the living in its most intimate recess. *In fine*, the machines it builds are just more complex, more and more human-like but less and less alive.[41]

The second objection we should deal with also relates to an apparent contradiction. If consumer health psychology works to secure the foundations of the productive body, how come it strives to curb extreme consumption? Consumption is necessary to feed the ever-intensifying production process that social psychology seems to protect and accelerate. And yet, in an apparent attempt to fight deregulated marketing, exemplar researches we have mentioned previously attempt to help consumers reduce their food, cigarette, alcohol, and gambling consumption (cf. introduction to Chapter II: Theoretical foundations – A critical review of consumer health psychology). Scratching the surface is enough to resolve this apparent contradiction however. A widely accepted marketing principle is that keeping a consumer is more profitable than acquiring a new one in most cases (Rust and Zahorik 1993). The communication costs incurred are lower and habits can be powerful

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[40] "Identity" here denotes the fact that they are identical.

[41] While the mechanic metaphor is mostly absent for consumer health psychology, it is interesting to note that one of Yang et al.'s section is titled "Conserving mental fuel." It stresses how "prior operations of the *mental machinery* [our emphasis] can significantly impair its regulatory capabilities" (Yang et al. 2012, p15).

consumption drivers. Needless to say a dead or bankrupted consumer is useless. Beyond this direct financial incentive to protect consumers from self-destructive excesses, overconsumption is a serious danger for the communication society marketing thrives on. Taken to its extreme, it constitutes a threat. Studying obesity and anorexia, Bordo (1990) argues that the slender body, highly valued in European and North American cultures, both reflects and executes a disciplined society. The obese and anorectic disturb the normalization process by refusing the cultural norms that shape a regulated and predictable body. Obesity subverts the consumption society by taking its logic to an extreme. It threatens the established social order by refusing its dictate, a social order that strongly benefits the capitalist Bourgeoisie. By curbing overconsumption, consumer health psychology ultimately protects the social model it has bloomed on. It reaffirms and secures its control over consumption. Expanding the Foucaldian argument, what is at stake in curbing obesity is the social body itself. When the consumption society faces the obese, it contemplates its own demise, its own self-destruction. And when consumer health psychology fights self-destructive behaviors, it protects both the biological and consumptive body it depends on.

2. Performing oneself

Our previous section approached the evolution of social psychology and its approach to the body through the prism of capitalist bourgeoisie's relation to the working class. To understand its logic of performance and control, however, it is equally interesting to consider how the reconfiguration of the body and corporeal management participated in an effort to accelerate the demise of aristocracy. The body crystallized the struggles that opposed two classes in their claim to power. As bourgeoisie slowly rose against nobility, dominant conceptions of the body started to change (Detrez 2002). The bloodline that had comforted aristocracy in its position thus far, became insufficient to justify the social hierarchy. Instead, the rising bourgeoisie promoted an ethics of progress and self-enhancement through personal effort. One had to earn, and not inherit, her or his status (although this opportunity was initially reserved to men). This rhetoric of self-enhancement echoed in the flesh as physical exercise and discipline (e.g. health walks, cold-based

hardening, rustic diets) slowly replaced bleedings, purges, and sweating as health practices (Detrez 2002, p134). The relation to the body transformed. While it froze social positions in an aristocratic world (calling for treatment that would purify the blood), it became a vector of change in a bourgeois value system (calling for training and hardening). The promotion of personal exercise, dieting, and other practices improving the body ultimately consecrated progress, enhancement, performance, and merit as terminal values. These activities' impact on health should not conceal their participation in the social and symbolic reconfiguration engineered by the rising bourgeois class. In this framework, the blood was not a limitation to social ascent anymore. Hard work was sufficient to build the body that would characterize leaders.

In *Le culte de la performance*,[42] Ehrenberg (1991) carefully considers the far-reaching, contemporary implications of this democratic and meritocratic ideal in the French society. He underlines how such ideal resulted in the promotion and glorification of self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and self-definition. The ideal egalitarianism promoted by Bourgeoisie still justifies blaming and praising citizens for their social position, professional success, health, physical fitness, and every other aspect of their lives. If only work separates success from failure, the individual is entirely responsible for her or his trajectory and position. This ideal egalitarianism, however, is actualized in practical inequalities, particularly visible in the social and professional worlds. Work does not guarantee social ascension. The democratic system that was supposed to provide equal chances to every citizen does not succeed in evening out the factual socio-economic and cultural differences that separate children from birth. The failure of classical modes of political action has resulted in a situation where citizens are expected to self-determine, but are left without the means and resources to do so. Facing this hopeless dead-end, individuals turn to alternative modes and myths of self-determination. Ehrenberg notices a slide from the social and political sphere to the economic and sports ones. He illustrates how entrepreneurship and sports-adventure came to represent new ideals in a society that urges the individual to define her or himself. The successful entrepreneur, like the adventurer or working-class sport hero, built

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[42] The cult of performance.

her or himself from scratch. She or he chose her or his trajectory and executed it against all odds. Ultimately, however, these new ideal figures which revitalize the myth of equal opportunities poorly conceal the deeply rooted anxiety created by atomization and self-determination. Worse, they tend to extend and intensify it. The individual is now "free" to build her or his trajectory not only professionally but also in her or his leisure, romantic relationships, diet, and every other aspect of life; but in a society that values personal action and performance, new opportunities also mean new responsibilities. The freedom to choose one's life fast transforms into a duty to "make something out of it." In this new meritocracy, nothing escapes the logic of performance. The individual does not only need to be efficient at work anymore. He is required to be efficient at life. [43]

These reflections on performance and identity in post-modern societies entice to consider consumer health psychology as both a symptom of, and stakeholder in, the reconfiguration of values and relations to the body. "Many health problems are, ironically, self-inflicted—people frequently behave in ways that are known to be detrimental to their long-term well-being" (Yang et al. 2012, p3). The sentence opening Yang et al.'s article illustrates a widespread tendency to consider unhealthy practices from an individual perspective. Most researches in consumer health psychology blame the consumer for her or his inability to avoid self-destructive behaviors. The self-control literature frequently presents indulgence as an individual failure. It is a personal weakness, a lack of willpower that leads to yield to desire. According to some influential accounts (Muraven and Baumeister 2000), self-control is similar to a muscle that can and must be trained. The inability to resist

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[43] To further illustrate the link between self-determination and performance, it is interesting to reflect on the multiple meanings the verb "to perform" can take. It has two widespread significations. It can mean "to succeed," a meaning which can be related to the logic of consumptive and productive efficiency we have described; but "to perform" can also be "playing a role." When the person (etymologically the one who wears the theatrical mask; cf http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/person) performs, she or he creates a character. The storyline might be partially written, but it is the actor that will ultimately breathe life into the part. The logic of performance that drives the post-modern life reconciles these two meanings. Performing at life is ultimately building and acting a rich, complex, and colorful character. While we are reflecting on "performance" polysemy, it is notable that "to perform" can also mean "having sex." The inability to perform in the bedroom is a shameful affliction and illustrates how much the logic of performance has penetrated even the most intimate recesses of our lives.

temptation then becomes an act of laziness, the manifestation of a personal vice. The perspective is slightly different in the visceral influence literature. As illustrated by our previous section, the body partially escapes the consumer's control. The individual is the victim of the body's nefarious drives. It is a thin line, however, that separates the victim from the guilty, a line which is outright crossed by Yang and his colleagues for example. Ultimately, the alienation of the body does not preclude an analysis in the vacuum of individuality, an analysis which does not find any blame, or merit for that matter, outside the self.

The individual is entirely responsible for her or his health and physical condition; but this responsibility does not involve autonomy. The consumptive and productive society imposes the norm of performance, incarnated through physical fitness. The individual is expected to self-determine but within the strict boundaries set or conveyed by the marketing industry. These norms that harshly condemn self-destruction are crucial in a society that values the individual's ability to build a constructive and efficient life. When the meaning of life is found in the creation of a productive trajectory, self-destruction is naturally interpreted as pure nihilism. It negates life's meaning and threatens the institutions that secure it. Consumer research is all the more committed to the reproduction of this somatic-symbolic system that it benefits from it. Building on Baudrillardian philosophy, Ehrenberg (1991) reminds us that consumption is a fast and easy way to build this unique trajectory. Possessions contribute to define and express us (Belk 1988); and the consumption or communication society, as Ehrenberg likes to call it, offers an apparently infinite reservoir of signs and sign combinations to build and perform oneself.[44]

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[44] Our reader might question the application of Ehrenberg's reflections to consumer health psychology's Anglo-Saxon context. The French culture provides the setting for his analysis and examples. The French republican values, particularly the liberty-equality dyad, structure the meritocratic logic of performance. Nonetheless, the idea that success is only for the taking, that everything is achievable through hard work is not entirely alien to the American culture. The "land of opportunity" is a strong and persistent theme in the American mythology. And so is the "self-made man" who will build himself and his empire from scratch, through courage, audacity, and ingenuity. There are important differences between the French and American cases. As noted by Ehrenberg in his follow-up book (Ehrenberg 1995), the political treatment of this myth and its malfunction drastically differ in the two countries. But the pressure to

This section's developments paint consumer health psychology not as a neutral observer of the world, but rather as a political actor. The way it construes the body and health issues integrates in a broader social and economic movement that builds individual and social performances into core moral values. The research stream, through its theories, methodologies, and recommendations simultaneously reflects and enforces this value system. By dismissing self-destruction as pure nihilism however, consumer health psychology fails to understand its meaning. It misses, or rather refuses to acknowledge the alternative society manifested through consumption practices it construes as irrational and involuntary. At the same time, it fails to recognize modes of identity construction that partially escape a strictly constrained self-determination aiming at a unique and glorious individual trajectory. In other words, it overlooks destruction's reactive, creative, and transformative potential at the individual and social levels. Discussing our findings, we should carefully consider how live music consumers' discourses and practices relate to these themes, how loudness consumption participates in the transformation, maintenance, contestation, or reinforcement of the dominant social project that we discussed in the last sub-sections.

B. The detachment logic

For consumer health psychology, the right relation to the body is, therefore, a relation that nurtures its productive abilities and efficiently exploits its potentialities in a way that supports the relational economy and facilitates the consumption, production, and exchange of signs. A second and complementary theme underlying consumer health psychology is distance. The right relation to the body is the one that keeps it at bay. We already stressed the alienation and submission advocated by the research stream (cf. C. From alienation to submission: Taming the body). Consumer health psychologists construe the body as a witch, a siren, a vicious beast that should be tamed. They propose to outsmart it using tricks. In doing so, however, they still recognize a modicum of corporeal agency. The body is objectified, but not entirely reified. It is still a force to count with, a disturbing presence. The detachment or

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perform oneself, the inadequate means to do so, and the anxiety resulting from this discrepancy appear to be cross-cultural constants.

compartmentalization logic reveals a temptation, the temptation to definitely silence and mechanize this noisy body, to strip it from its primal power, to complete its reification. This section considers this movement, its motivation, enforcement, and implications. We highlight and discuss the different manifestations of compartmentalization in consumer health psychology, and identify its deep anthropological motivation. Building on Duclos' theories, we argue that this logic integrates in the American ambiguous and phobic relation to violence (Duclos 2004). In the process, we identify and discuss the dangers of such an approach to health and the body.

1. Compartmentalization in consumer health psychology

Seminal papers from the self-regulation literature and decision sciences clearly stress the need to distance the body. Loewenstein (1996) emphasizes the role of temporal, physical, and sensory proximity in eliciting visceral cravings, such as sexual desire or hunger. It is much easier to resist a hypothetical cake we would be given a year from now than a real cake directly available on a table in front of us. Proximity weakens determination and makes immediate, but unhealthy, rewards loom larger than long-term well-being. This defiance towards close distance is reflected by the pre-commitment, postponement, and avoidance strategies the self-regulation literature frequently recommends in order to avoid unhealthy and other detrimental behaviors (Ariely and Wertenbroch 2002; Faber and Vohs 2012; Hoch and Loewenstein 1991). An efficient way to avoid unhealthy eating is, for example, to choose one's next meal when the body is silent; for instance, by choosing a beverage for an upcoming party while suffering aftereffects of alcohol. The consumer can use the temporal distance and pain experienced to make dispassionate, rational choices. Similarly, buying smaller packs of cigarette, despite their higher price, can help to reduce tobacco consumption. When the pack is empty, the urge to smoke comes back, and the only shop open is halfway through the city, the smoker might think twice about her or his desire. These strategies, like many others, encourage the consumer to dissociate the time and place of choice from the physiological cues that commonly motivate it. They help to make the consumption decision in a vacuum, away from nefarious corporeal influences.

This defiance towards close distances is not the result of psychologists' analysis as much as its core assumption and principle. The confrontation of short and long-term perspectives is common to most conceptualizations dealing with loss of control. The self-regulation literature traditionally pitches an immediate reward which is pleasurable but detrimental to health or well-being (e.g. indulging in tasty but fatty food) against a delayed reward which is judged preferable (e.g. staying healthy). Using Wertenbroch's words: "Call X a vice relative to Y, and Y a virtue relative to X, if and only if, at the margin, $X>_I Y$ (maximizing immediate pleasure) and $Y>_D X$ (maximizing delayed utility)" (Wertenbroch 1998, p318).[45] Wertenbroch's definition and assumptions brilliantly manifest the moralization of distance. The vice is the preference for immediacy over long-term utility. More precisely, based on non-constant discounting theory (Strotz 1956), it is the inability to overcome the illusion created by temporal proximity, an illusion that magnifies immediate pleasure until it becomes preferable to a superior long term-utility. We can see how this apparently neutral mathematical definition ties the distance logic to our previous reflections: the personal responsibility in vicious consumption, the seducing and treacherous quality of pleasure, and sub-optimality as a trait defining vices (rather than a consequence).

The visceral influence literature frames the problem in a slightly different manner. In the following quote, Loewenstein emphasizes the most important difference between the two literature streams, but simultaneously reminds a crucial, shared assumption: "It [Loewenstein's account] views impulsivity as resulting not from the disproportionate attractiveness of immediately available rewards but from the disproportionate effect of visceral factors on the desirability of immediate consumption" (Loewenstein 1996, p279). Loewenstein displaces and generalizes the blame. It is not time as much as the body that is responsible for impulse consumption. Immediacy only magnifies visceral factors' impact. There are two consequences to Loewenstein's analysis. As noted previously, it anchors the body as a nefarious agent responsible for impulse consumption; but it also extends the suspicion towards proximity. It is not only immediacy that accentuates the impact of

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[45] The "$_I$" subscript denotes "Immediate" while "$_D$" denotes "Delayed"

visceral urges but also physical and sensory closeness. These two dimensions, initially unaccounted for by non-constant discounting models, have since extended to the self-regulation literature which now includes social, psychological, and emotional distances in its conceptualizations (Faber and Vohs 2012).

The extension of this defiance towards social proximity is of particular interest. Echoing the definition of executive functioning (cf. B. Alienating the body), it emphasizes that the individual should not only be detached from her or his body but also from the other, in a more general sense. Recent research on the micro-social factors influencing unhealthy behaviors motivates such rupture. McFerran et al. (2010) for example investigate how other consumers' orders and body types affect one's food consumption. They suggest that consumers tend to choose larger portions of food following another consumer ordering a large (vs. small) quantity. This effect is moderated by the influencer's body type. Thin consumers tend to trigger more overeating than obese ones. An anchoring-adjustment process underlies these results. Other consumers' actions serve as anchors or norms. The subject then cognitively adapts her or his own consumption depending on the other consumer normality.[46]

While this research reintegrates the social into eating, it does so in a very specific and narrow way. McFerran et al.'s discussion section clearly illustrates the relation often established between the individual, the body, and the micro-social. In line with Wansink (2006), a renowned scholar and food guru, they stress that small portion eaters might be better off eating alone while large-portion eaters should seek a group. As a word of advice, the authors nonetheless add that a heavy-set colleague might still be a better lunch companion than a thin person who's eating in similar proportions. While the thin body is assumed to be the consumer goal, the obese or abnormal body is stigmatized. The authors politely mention that "large-portion eaters" would be better off eating in groups. However, their introduction and conceptual background, building on recent research (Chandon and Wansink 2007a 2007b;

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[46] The cognitive nature of the process is supported by a cognitive load manipulation that cancels the effects.

Hill and Peters 1998; Young and Nestle 2002), clearly draws the parallel between overeating and obesity. As a result, McFerran et al.'s conclusion encourages overweight consumers to regroup and thin ones to stay away.[47]

Beyond this obvious and dubious stigmatization, this research turns the other, her or his body, and corporeal practices into instruments dedicated to individual health. The other's body, even when the person is a lunch companion, is evaluated with respect to its impact on the quantities consumed.[48] Consumer health psychology focuses on a reified other. The micro-social network which is studied and re-created relates things rather than people. The other is an insignificant substance evaluated with respect to its ability to positively or negatively impact the consumer's body mass index. With this framing, consumer health psychology participates in the increasing atomization of social beings in industrialized societies. It manifests and enforces a now well-established break from metaphysical monism. In a monist conception of the world, all human beings, and the world they evolve in, constitute a single substance. They are inherently united in the performance of social life. Instead, consumer health psychology manifests and enforces the process of individuation which has progressively come to the definition of the individual as essentially separated from the other. This ontological redefinition of the person, taking its roots in the late 17th century court society, is a key dimension of the civilizing process (Detrez 2002, pp110-112). Interestingly, this civilizing process coincided with, and was partially performed through, a redefinition of corporeal ethics. Notably, the recommendations relative to corporeal noises (e.g. winds, belches) and expectorations progressively disappeared from the court society's educational treatises. The dissociation from other individuals coincided with a new reserve regarding corporeal expressions, which acted the dissociation of the self and the body. This perspective suggests that consumer health psychology's tendency to atomize

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[47] The consumer who wants to stay healthy should carefully consider who she or he is eating with based on the proportions they order; but, as this information is not readily available, it is probable that the person will use heuristics to evaluate the quantities consumed by others (such as the body type).

[48] McFerran et al.'s experimental design assumes that the influencer is unknown to the consumer. However, their discussion extends these results to situations involving acquaintances (such as a lunch with colleagues).

individuals, and its effort to silence the body, participate in a single overarching civilizing process.

2. The werewolf complex

Consumer health psychology, participating in a broader civilizing and disciplinary process, aims at distance. It strives to separate the individual from something. Our developments so far, have underscored the dual rupture it advocates, isolating the individual form both her or his body and social context. However, the research stream's meticulous and relentless effort to exile this corporeal other calls for further investigation. What is so frightening about the body roaming free? Consumers' welfare does not seem sufficient to justify the manic attempt to banish the body, an attempt that can result in significant psychological and social discomfort contrary to well-being.

The proper relation to the body consumer health psychology recommends (or rather tries to impose) oscillates between that of a tamer and that of a machine operator. Two symbolic universes revolve around the body. The first one equates it to a beast working on pure instinct, a wild animal following its visceral urges, a locust consuming everything until desolation (cf. C. From alienation to submission: Taming the body). The second fantasizes a silent and obedient body, closer to the machine than the animal, a point we illustrated in our section: 1. The productive body. Next, we suggest that these two interpretations constitute two faces of the same coin. Consumer health psychology attempts to flip it and let the civilized and mechanized face on top, but it is also conscious that the bestial tail will always lie beneath, ready to irrupt.

For Duclos in *The Werewolf complex: America's fascination with violence* (Duclos 2004), this duality actually underlies the entire American cultural and social relation to violence. The author argues that the American society is torn between two contradictory desires: a desire for order and a desire for violence, chaos, and savagery. Relating (1) American horror fiction and (2) serial killers media representation to Odinic myths, Duclos argues that this tension is resolved, or rather unresolved, through compartmentalization. The American culture fails to recognize its violent and animalistic desire, but

also refuses to renounce it. It excludes wild, destructive urges from the human nature, but still wants to enjoy their undeniable pleasure. By rejecting this animalistic desire in the abnormal, in the abject and monstrous, in the subhuman, it protects itself while keeping the ability to enjoy these vile pleasures on a phobic mode.

It is astonishing to see how clearly the werewolf theme runs through consumer health psychology. First, there is the compartmentalization of desire. The violent and uncontrollable desire is ascribed to the lupine body, while the more reasonable and controlled taste is ascribed to the human self.[49] The defiance towards treacherous visceral urges echoes a more deeply rooted defiance towards a catastrophic, all-consuming violence that threatens civilization. The pre-commitment, postponement, and avoidance strategies recommended to stay healthy remind the techniques used to control the uncontrollable in the werewolf complex. Countless cultural representations of "good" werewolves linger over their characters' ingenuous efforts to curb the destructive lupine frenzy. These solutions frequently imply chaining or locking one up in a cage. The character usually asks a friend to tie him up so she or he does not enter killing frenzies. These sacrifices are always painful, but necessary to maintain the human pleasures of civility such as friendship or romantic relationships.[50] Similarly, while pre-commitment might be painful when the consumption occasion arises (e.g. when the desire to smoke or drink hits), this pain is necessary to maintain a healthy and controlled body.

It is also noteworthy that popular depictions of werewolves often imply a temporary amnesia. It is frequent to see the man, or more rarely the woman, wake up naked in the woods with no recollection of her or his night roving. This part of the myth echoes Loewenstein's 6th proposition that urge-driven behaviors tend to "be forgotten, or will seem increasingly perplexing to the individual" (Loewenstein 1996, p278). Another intriguing similarity between the werewolf myth and consumer health psychology relates to the "what-the-hell" effect (Herman and Polivy 2011). The "what-the-hell" effect occurs when

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[49] Loewenstein (1996, p273) introduces his seminal paper by differentiating taste from visceral influences on four dimensions.

[50] See for example the character Oz in the popular TV show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* offers a good illustration of this process (Whedon 1998).

restrained eaters indulge in binge eating as the result of a dieting failure.[51] Yielding to temptation, even if it implies consuming a few extra-calories, can lead to give up the diet altogether and let cravings take control. When the beast surfaces, it roams free, kills and eats what it finds with little consideration for what it actually devours. The taste does not matter as much as the quantity. This effect stresses an additional similarity between consumer health psychology and the werewolf myth, but it also hints at the risk of breaking the civilizing control. It reveals the catastrophic appetite that social control is supposed to restrain and the difficulty to think an exit strategy. Even the slightest deviation from the straight line defined by the civilized order suffices to unleash the destructive, all-consuming violence of corporeal desire.[52]

3. The problematic mechanization of desire

The chaotic and disastrous desire for violence, therefore, calls for a strict control. It is met by an equally strong desire for order that fantasizes the rationalization and automation of social life as the only shield against barbarism, cruelty, and final destruction. When Kivetz and Simonson (2002) study pre-commitment to pleasurable activities (cf. 3. **Controlling corporeal pleasures**), they do not contradict existing consumer health psychology. They logically extend a movement that contributes to map, plan, and organize, to colonize, and master every desire in life. The relation to the body they consider is not sadistic. It is rather mechanistic. Whether the body gives pleasure or pain is irrelevant as long as it does so in a predictable and controllable way. Such mastery is presented as necessary in order to avoid the dissolution of the biological and, more importantly, of the social body it supports.

However, while controlling pleasure is sensible, controlling desire

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[51] Other factors can trigger the "what-the-hell" effect. See Burnette and Finkel (2012) for a short review.

[52] In a similar vein, it is interesting to note Faber and Vohs' reference to Le Bon seminal study, *The crowd: A study of the popular mind* (Le Bon 1895), in the introduction of their self-regulation literature review (Faber and Vohs 2012, p 467). Le Bon's ethnocentric, sexist, and racist analysis warns readers about the dangers of the crowd. The crowd, unlike the reasonable, individualized, and civilized subject, is a violent force that moves as a purely reactive force. Although it is passive (or maybe because it is), it can be extremely destructive as it submits to raw drives and impulses. From 1895 to 2012, the opposition of civilized order and instinctual violence, the fear it creates, and the self-granted authority to disband it, have been recurrent themes.

seems more illusory, not to say antithetical. Building on Levinas philosophy and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Marzano (2011, p359) defines desire as a "perspective line." The French expression she uses, "ligne de fuite" which would literally translate as an "escape line," is much more powerful though. With certain poetry, it reminds that the object of desire is always beyond reach, moving away as we think we get closer to an impossible and always postponed completion. Desire is in the lack, not in its satisfaction. This liquidity of desire, its perpetual but chaotic movement, makes it essentially unpredictable and uncontrollable. Facing desire, the individual is sovereign. She or he can try to fulfill it, renounce it, observe it from a distance, or displace its object; but she or he cannot silence it entirely without risking her or his humanity. Marzano, following a line traced by Deleuze and Guattari (1972), identifies desire as the creative force of human activity. This lack, this ontological flaw, motivates the individual to look outside what he cannot find within. It urges the individual to open to others to find her or his missing part. In doing so, it also brings the individual to recognize and define her or his subjectivity. This missing part that can be found in the other but not in me, this is what makes me distinct.

By alienating the consumer from her or his corporeal desires, the avoidance, postponement, and pre-commitment strategies advised by some consumer health psychologists thus contribute to strip the individual form her or his humanity and subjectivity. They rationalize and automatize decisions. Desires do not have to be renounced because they become effect-less. The frustrations they create become mere artifacts in a system that plans pleasures on a rational basis.[53] A mechanistic, controllable simulacrum replaces the animalistic desire. In the process, pleasure progressively detaches from desire. If the consumer does not want to participate in this hour-long massaging she or he pre-committed to 3 months ago, she or he will go anyway and maybe find pleasure there because it is time to; but this pleasure will not answer any desire. It is a surplus rather than a chase.

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[53] These comments apply specifically to researches that frame self-control dilemmas in terms of detachment, where desires and consumption decisions are temporally and spatially isolated. Some authors have taken different directions, however. Baumeister's insistence on willpower for example confronts desire much more directly, advocating a relation of renouncement rather than exile (Baumeister 2002).

This mechanization of desire is an efficient way to improve health, but it is not without risks. Duclos (2004) identifies two dangers in mechanizing desire. First, the process implies deploying an incredible coercive violence. We have already mentioned the violence inherent to disciplinary institutions that straighten up bodies and minds. The fear of a catastrophic and animalistic desire justifies setting up systems of surveillance and repression the individual cannot escape; but the violence this system implies dangerously flirts with the object it tries to control. The desire for order, power, and control can ultimately be a formidable breeding-ground for wilder and more destructive impulses. Discussing a forensic experimentation consisting in plugging electrodes on a serial killer penis to better understand her or his desire, Duclos wonders whether anyone would control for the experimenter's erection (Duclos 2004, p 181). This provocation might give rise to smiles; but it also entices us to reconsider Ariely and Loewenstein's (2006) study of young male immoral sexual conducts (cf. B. The moral body). What does this study tells us about its authors' desires? No other research ties so intimately sexual practices and power. The researchers did not only hire students to participate, but also imposed the material, the forbidden practices, and even the visual stimuli the participants would watch and masturbate to.[54] It is difficult not to interpret this study as the phobic enjoyment of the immoral conducts so harshly condemned. This enjoyment, hidden under scientific pretenses, justifies degrading participants, using their body and desire, and stigmatizing their behavior. This extreme case illustrates a reversal where the agent supposed to control the desire for violence ends up perpetrating it under a perverse mode. Unable to recognize its own desire, it objectifies it in others, with little respect for their subjective experience.

The second problem with this mechanization process is the stress it imposes on the creation of meaning. If we follow Deleuze and Guattari's idea that desire is at the heart of the human condition, that it provides its movement and uneven flow (Deleuze and Guattari 1972; Garo 2011), what does happen

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[54] More information would be required to assess to what extent the participants felt they had a choice when they signed the consent form announcing they would have to masturbate. It might have been uneasy to opt out from the experience facing the person in charge of obtaining the consent forms.

when desire is mechanized, uniformed, locked in a repetitive and un-reflexive movement? Life quickly risks becoming a void and meaningless experience. Meaning comes from otherness, from differences and contrasts. It is by confronting otherness that I can make sense of life. And desire is closely tied to this confrontation. It is the movement through which otherness is negotiated. It is through desire that subjectivity gets defined, that the meaningful differences between I and the other are construed. If desire requires the preliminary recognition of otherness, it is *through* desire that the individual can interpret this difference.[55] As such, the alignment of desires that consumer health psychology advocates greatly curbs meaning creation. In a mechanistic paradigm that fantasizes a neatly organized and well-structured desire, the latter is not an "escape line" anymore, ever-moving and evasive. It is a uniform straight road that every single individual should travel as fast as possible. It is a homogenized relation to otherness that consumer health psychology promotes. Through strict structuration, the research stream deprives desire from its chaotic movement. It binds it, greatly shrinking the space available to define one's subjectivity. As this space shrinks, subjectivities merge and differences fade. And without differences, meaning fails to emerge.

Duclos reminds us that marketers are stakeholders in the process. The "illusion dealers" (2004, p 229) provide automatons with much needed symbols, giving a sense of belonging and trajectory to uprooted individuals. They sell a direction the individual can aim for, "ready-made" lacks to be fulfilled. Consumer health psychology contributes to the movement, offering a catalogue of goals to pursue: having a proper sex life, a healthy nutrition, a smoke-free lifestyle… But in imposing these trajectories, they strictly frame desire's creative and subversive potential. Marketers sell meaning from a narrow catalogue that ensures the reproduction of the communication society. They channel desire reducing its chaotic movement to a predictable, one dimensional flow. In the process, desire's productive potential, or rather reproductive in this case, gets entirely directed to the maintenance of a

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[55] By tying desire and meaning, we do not wish to reproduce the hedonist premise that the meaning of life lies in the satisfaction of desires. Rather, we want to stress that desire is a tension that generates meaning (whose form and content is irrelevant right now).

mechanistic and controlled consumption society.[56]

IV. Conclusion

Beyond consumer health psychology's diversity of projects and formulations, lies a stable conception of the body. The body, sometimes equated with desire, emotions, and unwanted thoughts, is what escapes control. Whether it is a siren, a witch, or a vicious beast, the body always manifests a mystic, animalistic, sensual, and dangerous attraction, a burning desire the individual struggles to control. In its attempt to help consumers, the research stream has dreamt and worked to achieve the complete mechanization of the body and its corollary desire. This mechanistic detachment and careful organization of pleasures and pains do not confront desire. They avoid it. They exile desire lest the individual will fail to overcome its haunting call.

Consumer health psychology does not propose as much as it imposes this model. There is not much room in the literature for different relations to desire and the body. Early works by Baumeister proposed such an alternative, advocating a much more direct confrontation (Baumeister 2002), but the latest developments of his intellectual legacy, insisting on the diminution of desire and avoidance strategies, seem to rejoin the mainstream exile position (Faber and Vohs 2012; Redden and Haws 2012). If consumer health psychology relentlessly reformulates its recommendation, with only slight changes in substance, it might be that the research stream is a stakeholder in the process. This logic of mechanistic control serves a consumptive and productive system that has fed marketing for decades. In this movement, consumers' well-being and the valuation of control have progressively become dissociated goals.

We stressed this point in our introduction: sound is mostly absent from consumer health psychology. The physical harm it can cause does not seem to

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[56] We understand our theoretical *bricolage* might surprise some of our readers. Following Duclos' argument, we chose to relate meaning and desire. We extend his thought, trying to explicit a link he assumes but does not clarify. This insistence on meaning might appear irrelevant in the Deleuzian perspective we refer to. In the *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1972), desire is not the key to meaning. It is a disruptive force that gives life its movement. It is to some extent an alternative to meaning. Disconnecting desire from meaning, however, does not lessen the danger of mechanization, quite the opposite. In this perspective, mechanizing desire is ending life itself.

deserve the research stream's attention. It is true that the situation does not seem catastrophic compared to the obesity "epidemic" that implies far greater social and economic costs. It also poorly integrates in the "drive" rhetoric (compulsion and impulsion) that underlies the consumer health literature. Unlike food or drink binging, impulse purchases, smoking, or sexual compulsion, it does not seem to result from an uncontrollable drive to let go and indulge without restraint. Exposure to extreme sound levels appears too deliberate, too controlled to fall in the neat frame of catastrophic animalism. We would have great difficulties to speculate on the recommendations consumer health psychology would formulate regarding our issue. We might have looked in the wrong direction. The literatures on risk perception, social influences, or need for stimulation might be more adapted to the problem we are facing; three areas that are absent from our review.

We do not think it is the case, however. What we looked for in these pages was a tale of the body. Sound consumption struck us as a profoundly corporeal experience, and nowhere is the construction and integration of the body as clear as in the self-regulation and visceral urges literatures. If we could not derive recommendations from consumer health psychology (even fragmentary), it might be that its investigations miss some important dimensions of the corporeal experience, that they fail to fully capture consumers' conception of, and relation to, the body. There might be fundamental issues with the orchestrated mechanization or the animalistic construction to begin with. Consumer health psychology, at least the streams we focused on therefore constitutes an ideal point to start a dialogue. Although its claim regarding the body might be debatable, they offer one perspective to work from, or against.

Our developments emphasized some problematic areas, some tensions, inconspicuous but serious byproducts of the psychologist agenda. We do not claim these risks should necessarily lead to reject psychologists' recommendations altogether. Consumers and citizens might be perfectly satisfied with these trade-offs. They might be willing to sacrifice their animalistic desire to live longer. They might prefer the emotional and symbolic pain of mortification to the physical pain of illness or the psychological

distress of abnormality. They might prefer a civilized violence to a chaotic and catastrophic one. What we deem dangerous, however, is the one-dimensionally and supposed universality of the mechanistic ideal. Consumer health psychology concentrates immense powers. Benefiting from the scientific legitimacy of numbers, as well as extended media coverage, the research stream bears an increasing influence on political and social agendas. Through think tanks, best-selling books, and talk shows, it contributes to define what proper corporeal conducts are at the national and, to a lesser extent, international levels. Given the strong links that tie corporeal practices to broader political stakes, consumer health psychology's influence by far exceeds the definition of a proper diet. This soft but undeniable power, combined with the temptation to reduce the multitude of scientific perspectives to a single one, risks suffocating what should be a lively and ever-open debate about the body, desire, and health.[57] As such, if we propose alternatives or departures from this framework, they should not be understood as ready-made solutions, but rather as necessary counter-perspectives dedicated to stimulate the social debate. Our objective is not to replace a dogmatic paradigm with another.

For now, we will leave these counter-perspectives in their embryonic state. They are still very much critiques that do not offer any exit out of the currently dominant paradigm. They are potentialities, foundations we might build on to propose alternative public health policies and communications. It would be hasty, however, to do so right away. Immediately reacting to consumer health psychology's discourse and project would perpetuate what we think is its main drawback. It would overlook the consumer sovereign position towards desire, in this specific case the desire for sound. More interesting and important than psychology's recommendations is the way individuals negotiate these recommendations and pressures to practice their body in a specific way. Consumers are not taking health decisions in a socio-cultural vacuum; but they are not blindly following the prescriptions of a few experts either, even if these prescriptions are omnipresent, ingrained in disciplinary institutions. As such, before presenting transformations or alternatives, it appears necessary to listen to and observe the consumer in her or his relation to self-destruction, desire,

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[57] At least from the democratic perspective we adopt in this research.

health, and the body. Failure to do so would inevitably lead to utopian and ucrhronian considerations, detached from the flesh of our social lives.

In the next chapters, we will attempt to better understand consumers' relation to extreme sound levels. This question is inherently tied to the concepts we covered in this literature review: desire, the body, consumption, and health; but we will prefer a more microscopic approach first, focusing on loudness' meaning and experience within the metal community. This microscopic study, working on the multiple facets of extreme sound consumption, appears necessary to better understand consumers' position towards existing policies and the theories that underlie them. Failing to account for loudness consumption's complexity and multi-dimensionality would undoubtedly lead to simplistic accounts of self-destruction. After we complete this microscopic investigation, we will come back to the psychological accounts of self-destruction and try to initiate a dialogue with them, using our interpretation of consumers' practices and discourses to question and complement existing theories and policies. The next chapter will present our methodology. We will describe how we approached loudness and tried to deconstruct its symbolic and experiential value during heavy metal concerts.

Chapter III: Methodology

Suggested listening:

- Mastodon – Oblivion [Instrumental] (2009)
- The Dillinger Escape Plan – 43% Burnt (1999)
- Painkiller – Tortured Souls (1992)

We realized early in this doctoral project (i.e. back in 2009), that sound served multiple functions for concert-goers. While it participated in the enjoyment of metal music at an individual level, it also appeared to cement the community. Explicit references to sound and loudness were omnipresent in record titles, label names, and song lyrics. Beyond this discursive analysis, our active participation in concerts made it quite clear that sound contributed to bonding with others on a much more sensual level. The loudness was engulfing and it felt like space shrunk as the bass and drums pounded. This initial reflection on the role of sound led us to believe that it was a complex subject-object whose meaning was rich but difficult to grasp. As such, facing this elusive sensation, we worked a multi-method research process to gain a more detailed understanding of what sound stood for, of its role and contribution to the metal culture and concert experience.

Our methodological objective was, therefore, to explicit and unfold sound's meaning in metal concerts. We wanted to capture and reveal more nuances about sound and loudness consumption. We deemed theoretically and practically necessary to go beyond prevailing explanations about this consumption practice. Outside the scene, informal interviews revealed that loudness consumption was predominantly understood as (1) a visceral pleasure beyond understanding, and (2) a sign of teenage rebellion against an unspecified other. *A posteriori*, while both these accounts might help understand sound consumption, they do not exhaust its rich meaning. Members of the subculture talked about sound with more reverence but were not more loquacious about it.

The meaning of sound is elusive. It moves and transforms with times, people, and places. Acknowledging this elusiveness, we tried to surround it

using diverse data collection and interpretation methods.[58] By combining a wide range of observation, interview, and interpretation methods, we were able to paint an impressionistic picture, or soundscape, of loudness. The principle underlying this approach is that while our object might not be fully captured, it can be better understood if watched from a variety of perspectives. In the next sections, we will present our methodology in more details. We will first introduce our way of looking at things (I. Our way of looking at familiar facts). This section develops the principles and assumptions that have guided our analysis. We discuss how we approached the relations between our theory, field, and method (cf. A. The theory—field—method prism) and present semiotics as an integrating framework (cf. B. Semiotics as an integrating framework). We then move on to our data collection techniques presenting in detail how we mixed observation (cf. A. Field observations) and interview methods (cf. B. Long interviews) to secure richer descriptions and interpretations of sound consumption. Finally, we present the semiotic square as a way to integrate eclectic data and develop richer interpretations about our object of study (cf. C. The semiotic square). Note that while our presentation is sequential, our work was much more iterative, as we constantly moved back and forth between our theory, field, and methods as explained in section 2. Research as a triadic relation.

I. Our way of looking at familiar facts

In this section, we will present our "way of looking at familiar facts". Edmund Leach (Leach 1977) proposed this formula to define Claude-Levi Strauss' Structuralism. In doing so, Leach insisted on the idea that Structuralism is not a method as much as an attitude towards society and social life based on philosophical assumptions often left unwritten (Deliège 2001, p13). Deliège (2006, p140) later extended this definition to Functionalism, underlining the poor theoretical foundations of the empiricist Anglo-Saxon research tradition. We borrow the formula to qualify the way we approached sound consumption in metal concerts. Before entering into the details of our data collection and interpretation, it is first important to specify the principles that guided our

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[58] The French word "cerner" would be convenient here. It does not only mean understanding an idea or subject, but also depriving a fugitive from any escape route.

approach to sound consumption, to the concert experience, and to the metal music and community. The methods themselves should be understood as technical actualization of these principles. While these techniques might poorly apply to other issues, we believe the principles guiding the analysis would be adapted to a wide range of situations and research questions.

A. The theory—field—method prism

For clarity's sake, we have presented our work in a sequential fashion (and will continue to do so). We follow a classical template consisting in identifying an issue, laying down theory, and presenting a methodology neatly separating observation from interview techniques. We will then present and discuss our findings. While such a format is didactical, it poorly represents the way we actually approached sound consumption. Our theory, field, and method were much more entangled and fed each other as we progressed in our investigation. In order to understand their interaction, it is interesting to resort to an optical metaphor, that of a triangular prism. A prism is an optical object that can be used to split light into multiple colors. With the right properties, it can break white light into its constituent spectral colors (usually known as the colors of the rainbow).[59] We propose to see sound as a form of white light and the theory—field—method trilogy as the poles of the prism that will help to split its multiple significations.

1. Refracting light: Deconstructing and reconstructing sound

We have already mentioned metalheads' difficulty or reluctance to articulate the meaning and importance of loudness in metal concerts. Working on this project, we assumed that such silence might not be due to a lack of meaning but rather to an overflow. Building on Mauss (1967), it was tempting to see sound as a total social fact within the metal community. Mauss crafted the notion of total social fact to emphasize the complexity and multidimensionality of some primitive institutions. The gift in traditional societies, for example, is not a mere transaction between two individuals. It is a meaningful and organizing principle of the social life, a total prestation with moral, religious, economic, and aesthetic connotations (Mauss 1967). With this notion, Mauss

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[59] Thanks to Baptiste Vericel, engineer, for his patient explanations.

emphasizes how apparently insignificant and taken for granted facts actually carry a rich meaning that runs through the fabric of society. While Mauss' theory of the gift was later criticized (Deliège 2006), his definition of the total social fact stays very relevant and powerful. The idea that sound, and more specifically loudness, in the metal culture might be such facts was driven by pre-existing knowledge of the field and early observation sessions. It was clear that loudness had a psychological value for consumers, but also that it bore a symbolic charge. Metal concert-goers usually talked about sound in aesthetic and legal terms but their discourses also took moral and religious overtones. The very sensation of loudness appeared to have an integral quality, subsuming multiple meanings and values in its somatic experience. It emerged as a total social sensation structuring and organizing the social life of the community.

For Mauss, the full meaning of the total social fact is usually invisible to its performers. As a guiding principle of the social life, it is internalized and usually left unquestioned. Its meaning is hidden in plain sight.[60] The somatic dimension of the loudness experience was prone to reinforce this blinding obviousness. As argued in our theoretical section, in most cases, the body is too obvious to be noticed by the person it incarnates (cf. A. A philosophical detour: The ambiguous status of the human body). In this context, our objective was to deconstruct this obviousness, expose its multiple dimensions, and consider their implications. In assuming so, we rejoined Crozier (1981 [1977], p456) for whom the researcher's role is to go underneath surface interpretations. More specifically, Crozier considers that to understand actors' strategies, it is crucial to question how obvious these behaviors are to the actors themselves. This is the only way to dig up the meaning of practices and discourses hidden behind their apparent "non-sense."[61] Resorting to our optical metaphor, sound in concert settings is like white light. Its multiple dimensions

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[60] It is tempting at this point to refer to a literary example. In Poe's (1964 [1844]) short story, The Purloin Letter, a letter that could be used to blackmail an undisclosed female character is left casually in a cheap card rack hanging from a desk. The police, despite their best efforts and the use of emerging scientific investigation methods, are unable to find the object. It is only through the power of imagination, a strong sense of analysis, and an effort to empathically retrace the thought process of his nefarious opponent that the main character is able to find the letter. These three qualities, we will argue, are fundamental to understand the meaning of sound for metal concert-goers.

[61] The search for hidden, abstract meaning beyond superficial manifestations is also central to Strauss' structuralism and semiotics (cf. B. Semiotics as an integrating framework).

(psychological, moral, aesthetic…) or spectral colors are combined. To the concert-goer, it is a monolithic, undifferentiated block. Like white light, it is fundamental to the perception of the world but usually stays unnoticed unless it is refracted, broken down into its constituting elements.

Like most analogies (Cathcart and Klein 2008), the prism is not a perfect representation of our research approach. We need to bring an important precision regarding the output of the process. In breaking down light, an optical prism neatly dissociates clearly identified and separable colors from red to violet. Our research approach does not claim such a cleanly structured result. As explained in our discussion of Mauss, the various dimensions of a total social fact (legal, moral, economic, aesthetic…) are entangled. As such, if we accept that sound might be a total social fact, simply isolating these dimensions would lead to an artificial result. To better understand sound consumption, we need to identify its various dimensions but also to consider (1) their interactions and (2) to what extent and how they constitute each other. We, therefore, conceived our work as a two-step process. Deconstructing sound consumption and isolating its dimensions is the first stage. In a second stage, we need to reconstruct it into a coherent whole, building on our improved understanding of its different facets. A precision finally: the prism metaphor might assimilate our role to that of an objective observer using an external instrument to peer into the nature of sound consumption. Such an idea would clearly reproduce consumer health psychology's model, granting the researcher a form of clairvoyance when it comes to human behavior. On the contrary, although we engaged this research process self-reflexively, we undoubtedly projected on the phenomenon observed some of our own political inclinations and aspirations. We will, therefore, attempt to highlight, in our developments, when such risks loomed over our reflections.

2. Research as a triadic relation

In defining method, theory, and field as the three poles of our prism, we want to stress their non-hierarchical and interactive relations in our research process. In doing so, we wish to dissociate our approach from both hypothetico-deductive, and purely inductive logics of the field. In a hypothetico-deductive

framework, theory drives the research process. The researcher is supposed to deduce logical hypotheses from existing theories. These hypotheses are then tested using, for example, experimental designs. It is, therefore, the theory that drives the method used and the data collected (Deshpande 1983).[62] Conversely, inductive paradigms, such as grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967), attempt to let theoretical insights emerge from the researchers' fieldwork, observations, and informal interactions. In this case, fieldwork should drive the research process and theoretical developments. Such approaches require the researcher to give up on preconceived expectations about the field and be open to new ideas. The principle of inductive research is not to test a theory defined *a priori*, but to build it *a posteriori* from the data collected. Our approach differed from both these extremes.

We consider that a fully inductive paradigm such as grounded theory is impossible and possibly detrimental to the understanding of consumption patterns. The researcher approaches the field with a personal and academic history that she or he uses to make sense of the world and the particular object he is studying. This personal history cannot be turned off and will necessarily shape the way the problem is construed. Back to the optical metaphor, even at the very beginning of the research project, we saw sound consumption and the whole concert experience through a prism. The prism was very raw, cracked, and opaque, revealing a low range of distorted and blurry colors. It was made of pre-existing knowledge of the field accumulated through mindless concert experiences, rough observation methods built through everyday life, and vague theories gathered in and outside classrooms. Instead of denying such preconceptions and potential biases, we propose to follow the road open by the crisis of representation. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) borrow Marcus and Fischer's expression (Marcus and Fischer 1986) to label what they consider to be the fourth moment in qualitative research history.

This moment is characterized by extended reflections regarding the researcher's role. It notably assumes that knowledge is created as much in

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[62] Note that our own experience with hypothetico-deductive work has revealed a much more subtle and inductive process in which data patterns often lead to *post-hoc* theory development. However, the ideal of hypothetico-deductive work still assume a primacy of theory over data.

writing as it is in fieldwork. Writing is not a faithful transcription of field observations but is marked by the researcher's background, his race, gender, and class. It is a biased process that can lead to develop theories reflecting and supporting his position. While some theorists advocate abandoning writing altogether, others propose to reconsider the relations between writing and fieldwork (Denzin and Lincoln 2005, p21). Along with the latters, we chose to approach the research process as a self-reflexive endeavor in which writing and field work constitute different perspectives that inform each other. Confronting these perspectives helps the researcher to be more critical of his work and position in the process.

Following this epistemological detour, it would therefore appear more accurate to talk about a hypothetico-inductive logic of the field (Crozier 1977, 1981, p453). Crozier proposes this formulation to emphasize that the researcher does not approach the field blank-minded. Her or his experience, readings and works in comparable fields direct her or his attention towards particular issues and situations. This experience and initial approach will consequently orient the research process. Crozier, however, insists that this early orientation is only a departure point. The researcher then needs to define and understand the object of study through a careful and systematic process of observation, comparison, and interpretation. Crozier presents this process as an iterative method consisting in designing hypotheses which are constantly confronted to the field and refined. While confronting these hypotheses to actors' behaviors and strategies, the researcher should specifically look for discrepancies that will lead to question and refine her or his theory. As such, theory and field are engaged in a permanent dialogue that helps the researcher to maintain a delicate distance to the issue considered.

Crozier's research approach can be a solid foundation to consider the relations between field and theory. It acknowledges the biased nature of the research process and proposes ways to secure a richer understanding of agents' practices and discourses. However, reflecting on our own research process, a significant difference should be noted. The dialogue we tried to establish is triadic rather than dyadic. Crozier underlines how the field is used to refine theory, and how theoretical orientations can influence the approach of the field.

He does not discuss how data collection and analysis methods participate in the construction of theory.[63] In discussing our data collection and interpretation process, we will attempt to show how the methodological choices we made (types of tools used and combined) influenced the construction of our field and theory. Reciprocally, we will try to underline how our theoretical developments and the specificities of our field contributed to shape our methodology[64].

Concisely, we designed our research aiming at a richer understanding of sound consumption. We tried to approach the issue reflexively, multiplying theoretical and methodological perspectives in order to secure more nuanced descriptions and interpretations about our consumption object. We worked on integrating as closely as possible our theory, methodology, and field. Such integration and the reflections it involved were necessary to develop more subtle analyses. This approach did not guarantee the political neutrality of our research process. However, it helped considering a broader range of perspectives and interpretations, allowing the adoption of positions which are better informed and take into account the complexity of the phenomenon at hand. Semiotics offered a powerful way to think and organize this integration. Our next section discusses how this science of signs and sign processes helped to better make sense of sound consumption.

B. Semiotics as an integrating framework

As a foreword, we need to mention that our discussion of semiotics and its contribution to consumer research will heavily rely on Jean-Marie Floch's work. Floch devoted a significant part of his career to contextualizing and applying semiotics to the consumption field. His work clearly illustrates how relatively abstract semiotic theories can be used to (1) better understand

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[63]Crozier discusses the importance of confronting emic and etic perspectives in the research process. However, he proposes a fixed sequence (from etic, to emic, and back to etic) and leaves no room for an adaptive methodology that would evolve with field work and theory development.

[64] We could further differentiate our approach from Crozier's one. For example, while power is the central concept in his work, we are more interested in the meaning of practices and discourses. Additionally, we think his deliberate effort to find rationality in actor's strategies might curb the understanding of their behavior. However, these points are not directly relevant to our work and do not affect the methodological reflections we have presented.

consumption practices, and (2) design efficient solutions to managerial issues (Floch 1988, 1990, 1995).

Semiotics "aims at elucidating the conditions in which meaning can be produced and perceived. Therefore its concerns exceed signs alone, but rather involve the recognition of systems of signification manifested by both verbal and non-verbal languages" (Floch 1988). Semiotics is a science of meaning. It studies how signs, such as words, gestures, or garments make sense. To do so, it decomposes the sign in two parts: a signifier and a signified. The signifier refers to the formal properties of the sign. It is its container. Let us consider a simple example: the word, or linguistic sign, "pen." The signifier, in this case, is constituted of the letters *p-e-n* which are perceived by the reader. The signified, on the other hand, is the meaning or content of the sign, in this case: "an instrument for writing or drawing filled with ink or a similar substance." United through a process of semiosis, the signifier and the signified constitute the sign. Floch's definition stresses that the interest of semiotics lies in the plane of the content, i.e. in the systems of signification, rather than in the plane of the form. This plane, however, is inaccessible without a thorough analysis and structuring of available signifiers.

In explaining how meaning is produced and perceived, semiotics provides researchers with tools to unravel the signification of consumption practices. It allows unearthing the deeper values and symbolic foundations which underpin consumers' behaviors. The scope of semiotics is not limited to words. Our daily environment is teemed with non-linguistic but meaningful signs.[65] We have discussed extensively the cultural and symbolic dimensions of the body. We mentioned how obesity and anorexia could be interpreted as signs of resistance against the dominant view of the slender body (cf. 1. The productive body). This brief discussion highlighted that the body's shape, its use and management, are to be understood as part of broader systems of signification; and therefore constitute ideal objects of study for semiotics. Sensations themselves can be approached as signs. Howes (2011) emphasizes the cultural relativity of the senses, of their use, of their combination and the

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[65] Floch has, for example, convincingly argued that the organization of space in a hypermarket (Floch 1988) could convey different experiential values.

ways they are valued. As such, it should be possible, using semiotics, to deconstruct sensations and identify their symbolic meaning and value for the consumer, as part of a specific culture. Next, we introduce and discuss three properties of the semiotic approach. Our objective in doing so is twofold. First, the centrality of semiotics in our research requires a more precise definition of its underlying principles. These principles will condition the understanding and coherence of our discussions. Second, in doing so, we hope to highlight clearly the interest of this theoretical orientation in our specific case. After presenting these principles we will define and disambiguate key concepts of semiotics which will frequently surface in our developments. This disambiguation is all the more necessary that some terms in semiotics take a meaning which differs from common acceptances.

1. A structural approach: Meaning comes from relations

Influenced by the linguistic tradition, semiotics is a structural approach (Floch 1988). Meaning is to be found in the relations that inter-define terms rather than in the terms themselves. Borrowing Greimas and Courtès example (Greimas and Courtès 1993 [1979]; p363), life only takes its meaning or value in relation to death. Without death, the fragility and finitude of life would be incomprehensible. In accordance with Floch's definition, semioticians are, therefore, more interested in systems of significations than in the signs themselves. Given our research question, it is thus crucial to approach sound consumption as part of a broader sign system. The clothing, dietary habits, dancing behaviors, and communication styles characterizing the metal concert experience all contribute to form this system. As a consequence, they should be thoroughly described and related in order to understand our consumers' complex relation to sound. The sign system constituted by the concert experience should also be contrasted with the systems it tries to differentiate from (dominant conceptions of pleasures, the body, and sensations for example).

It is interesting, at this point, to mention Levi-Strauss' influence on Floch. The latter repeatedly acknowledges this heritage in the opening quote, acknowledgement, and introduction sections of his book *Identités Visuelles*

(Floch 1995). It would be outside the scope of this dissertation to propose a full critical analysis of Levi-Strauss' work. It has been done thoroughly and eruditely elsewhere (Deliège 2001, Leach 1977). However, it is worthwhile to mention an aspect of Levi-Strauss' research approach that is not discussed by Floch. Levi-Strauss investigations often started with the identification of an issue such as a mask, a myth, or a rite (Deliège 2001, p65). The notion of "issue" is twofold here. It obviously refers to the question the researcher faces. How can the anthropologist explain the adoption of a particular form of mask, myth, or rite in a specific primitive tribe? But it also refers to the issue the tribes were trying to solve when they designed these objects, discourses, and practices. The assumption underlying Levi-Strauss' analyses is that these apparently naïve and simplistic practices are actually parts of elaborated systems of thought used to make sense of the world. Transposing Levi-Strauss' concern to our context, it is therefore necessary to understand sound consumption as part of a broader attempt to negotiate and understand one's relation to the world. This attempt requires putting sound back in a system of signs, of discourses, and practices that will elucidate its underlying signification.

2. A generative approach: Articulating layers of meaning

In presenting and defining semiotics, Floch underlines the framework generative property (Floch 1988, 1990, 1995). Meaning is conceptualized as a pathway through which abstract relations between terms are given a form and shape. These simplest and most abstract relations, such as the life—death opposition, are the roots of meaning. They constitute its semio-narrative structure. However, they are not tangible. They constitute the 'virtualities' consumers choose to exploit. Building on our previous example, the life—death opposition is central to the metal culture. There is an obvious attraction to death-related symbols which is conveyed in very different ways. While the color black dominates metalheads' dress code, death is also a very common theme in metal song lyrics. Clothing and writing are two different ways to express or manifest a similar underlying opposition. Particular clothes, lyrics, and images constitute meaning's discursive structure. The discursive structure

emerges when the consumer selects and orders the virtualities they chose to exploit.

Meaning is, therefore, composed of different layers. The manifest behaviors and discourses we observe and listen to are the results of a generative process that articulates these layers from the most abstract to the most complex. Semiotics' generative quality can enrich the research process in different ways. First, while we presented the path in a down-top fashion (from the most abstract to the most complex layers), it is possible to approach it in the other direction, to derive the semio-narrative structures from their manifestations. This top-down analysis is a powerful way to uncover the deeper meaning of sound consumption. More generally, identifying these different layers and reconstructing their articulation can contribute to enrich meaning at every level of the semiotic pathway. Constantly confronting meaning's semio-narrative and discursive structures forces the researcher to frequently question and refine her or his understanding of the field and consumption object. It is a way to constantly challenge established knowledge to reach more nuanced and relevant descriptions and interpretations. Finally, semiotics' generative nature is very convenient in a multi-method study. Our life—death example underlines how a single opposition can be manifested in very different forms (clothing, visuals, and writing). Semiotics will help us to reduce a multitude of interviews, photos, logs, verbal and non-verbal manifestations to a more manageable number of core relations in a systematic way.

3. A narrative approach: Interest in the narrative forms of discourse

As a generative approach, semiotics considers verbal and non-verbal discourses as enactments of underlying structural relations. As a narrative approach, it focuses on these discourses' specific forms and articulation. This "interest in the narrative forms governing discourse" (Floch 1988) led semioticians to borrow and refine theories developed in other fields. Floch, for example, uses the folk tale structure developed by Propp (1968) and refined by Greimas to make sense of consumers' discourses about hypermarkets. He proposes to see the shopping experience as a tale made of multiple micro-tales

including complex programmes of action such as "queuing at the checkout", "paying", or "loading the car." The choice of these micro-tales and, more importantly, the way they are structured and dynamically combined by consumers convey meaning.

This connection between fiction and consumer narratives is not just an easy and convenient comparison. Celsi et al. (1993), for example showed how skydivers apply models conveyed by mass media to make sense of risk and death. But it is maybe Goffman (1959) who emphasized the best the theatre-like dimension of everyday life. His analysis stresses the performative nature of social life and the impossible escape from the roles we play. Whether life is theatre or theatre-inspired, it only appears relevant to use tools and theories developed in dramatic and tale studies to cast a different light on loudness consumption. We believe Floch's work on narrative schemas is a good illustration (Floch 1988, 1990). But it is not the only way to take into account the narrative nature of consumers' discourses. While Floch's approach is predominantly syntagmatic, focusing on the sequences and articulations of actions, we adopted a more paradigmatic approach we will introduce later in this chapter (B. 1. b. Structured observation).

Semiotics is a vast project. It is simultaneously a science, a collection of tools, and a general attitude towards issues. In its strictest sense, it is the well-defined science of signs studying meaning production and perception. As a collection of tools, it gathers multiple methods designed to elaborate richer interpretations of both verbal and non-verbal discourses. Finally, as an attitude towards issues, semiotics takes a specific interest in the hidden, the concealed relations underlying actions and discourses. Ultimately, these three levels of the theory concur to "get more intelligibility, more relevance, more contrasts" (Floch 1990, p9).[66]

4. Meaning, value, and valorization: Elements of definition and disambiguation

We should finally disambiguate three concepts which will frequently resurface in our analysis: meaning, value, and valorization. Throughout our readings, we

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[66] « Obtenir plus d'intelligibilité, plus de pertinence, plus de différenciation »

came across different approaches to these concepts. The definitions we propose here are inspired by the works of Greimas and Courtès (1993 [1979]), Floch (1998, 1990), Barthes (1964) and Hébert (2007). Our intention is not to expose the complexity of semiotic theories, but rather to provide our readers with the keys necessary to understand our methodology and findings. We will, therefore, attempt to strike a compromise between our definitions' technical precision and simplicity. We used the term "meaning", so far, as it provides a direct intuition about the object we are interested in. Usual understandings of the word point towards both the ideas that (1) a concrete object, practice, or discourse might stand for something deeper and more abstract (e.g. an idea, concept, moral position), and that (2) this deeper level might serve as a basis for human intentionality. From a semiotic perspective, however, Greimas and Courtès (1993 [1979], p348) argue that the term "meaning" is "indefinable" before it is articulated within structures of signification (cf. 1. A structural approach: Meaning comes from relations). As such, we will attempt to restrict our use of the term to expressions which assume such structures, e.g. the "denotative" and "connotative meanings" we will introduce in our videographic analysis (cf. 4. Videography).

Writing about the meaning consumers attach to specific objects, we will prefer the term "value". The notion of linguistic value insists on the relativity of signification. The value of a term is always relative to the set of values it is situated in, in line with semiotics' structural principle. More specifically, we will use the term to refer to what Greimas and Courtès (1993 [1979], p415) label as "actualized" and "realized" values. These notions approach value through the relation existing between a subject and an object of value. To illustrate this idea in a simple manner, during our interviews, our discussions frequently referred to "loudness" or "hearing protections" as objects of value, while our interviewees constituted the subjects ascribing and articulating these values through their organization of narrative structures. Note that the agents we will consider will sometimes be collective in nature. We might, for example, talk about loudness' destructive value for the heavy metal community or public health institutions.

Stating that loudness has a destructive value for an observer does not necessarily imply that it is positively valued by this observer. It only indicates that this subject observer, in a specific context and sign system, invest this object with significations related to destruction. Depending on the observer, this position might be invested negatively or positively. This polysemy of the word "value," which can either refer to logical or ethical positions and relations, will require our attention, especially while discussing the political value of loudness. In our developments, the term "value," and "valorization" will usually refer to the logical acceptance of the term. We will append the terms "ethical" or "political" to the term "value" when we want to emphasize the moral investment of the logical positions considered.

Finally, we use the neologism "valorization" to define the **process** through which subjects invest an object with a value. It does not denote the content of a signifier, but the process through which it is invested with a value. For example, talking about the aesthetic valorization of loudness will lead us to discuss **how** consumers invest loudness with aesthetic values. This term underlines that signification is a doing as much as a being. Note that, in our developments, the object of valorization can not only be a formal signifier (e.g. loudness), but also a predefined value or relation. Referring back to our theoretical discussion, we might, for example, say that we studied the ethical valorization of the let-go—control semantic category (object) from consumer health psychology's perspective (subject). Although we approached this issue through formal signifiers (i.e. scientific texts), our interest lied in the ways psychologists invested the value system underlying these formal manifestations

II. Collecting and interpreting manifestations

Our objective is, in sum, to identify the tensions underlying sound consumption. However, these underlying relations are not directly accessible. They can only be apprehended through their discursive manifestations, in a simplistic but clear way: what consumers do and say about it. As such, a crucial step in any semiotic analysis consists in to collecting these manifestations. We have already stressed the need to approach issues from a

variety of methodological and theoretical angles or perspectives (cf. 1. Refracting light: Deconstructing and reconstructing sound). Our introduction of semiotics further stresses this requirement. Unearthing behaviors' deep meaning requires reconstituting the complex sign systems they are embedded in. Failure to comply would lead to build underdetermined systems rendering any interpretation highly questionable.

We will present our data collection starting with observation methods and finishing with interviewing techniques. However, we should note that we actually went back and forth between methods. Some interviews for example led us to observe the field in a different way. Conversely, field observations sometimes drove our discussion with respondents. Our upcoming developments will underline these interactions and emphasize how our different methods complemented each other to secure richer descriptions. This section will also present our interpretive techniques. In some cases (e.g. the videographic analysis), we could not dissociate the data collection from its interpretation and decided to present them jointly. We conclude this section by presenting the semiotic square, a non-data-specific interpretive method we used to make sense of the rich but multiform material we had collected.

A. Field observations

We planned our fieldwork to maintain a delicate balance between first-hand experience and critical distance. A common and sensible criticism formulated against field observation as a data collection method relates to the researcher's involvement towards the population of interest. Studying Star Trek communities, Kozinets (2001) is not just an objective researcher. By his own admission, he is "a devoted viewer of *Star Trek* and a collector of related merchandise." This involvement is inherent to cultural studies as it is often the only way to access closed circles of consumption (e.g. drug addicts in Hirschman [1992] or anti-consumption communities in Kozinets [2004]). Experiencing the object of study is also crucial to understand and interpret consumers' discourses. It contributes to the necessary "detour through actors'

interiority" mentioned by Crozier (1981 [1977], p458).[67] However, closing the consumer-researcher distance also impairs the latter's ability to think the issue critically. Without proper safeguards, involvement in the field can negatively impact the extent and focus of attention and comprehension processes (Celsi and Olson 1988). This issue weighed on our study. We started to listen to heavy music such as metal and punk long before we started this project. Retrospectively, and compared to the consumers we worked with, we do not think it played a major role in our social integration. However, we cannot deny we developed a favorable relation to this specific musical genre and its culture through this early exposure. Moreover, our progressive integration in the metal community regularly revived the risk to lose our critical perspective. We accounted for this observer/participant duality in three ways. We systematized the data collection by mixing unstructured and structured observation, resorted to external observers and, finally, dissociated data collection and analysis using photography.

1. Unstructured observation

We group under the term "unstructured observation" research practices that do not follow a systematic approach to the field such as informal interviews, participation to social events and in-the-fly note-taking. These research practices are fundamental as they contribute to give a general sense of a problem, gather contextual information, and more importantly help toward the researcher acculturation and integration (Mariampolski 2001). Our involvement in the field was not limited to concerts. We also developed lasting relationships with metal enthusiasts. Their help was precious in understanding the metal culture and gaining access to different scenes. Frequent conversations with them helped us to refine and question our theories. It is only retrospectively that we could call these mentors key informants. We met some of them for reasons alien to this project. Albeit crucial, their contribution to our research was often incidental.

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[67] In French, Crozier refers to the "détour par l'intériorité des acteurs." We should mention, however, that this detour is an ideal objective rather than a realistic achievement. We should work to understand actors' experience from an emic perspective, and yet be aware that it is ontologically impossible to fully experience the other's experience.

The internet also offered many opportunities to observe and stay connected to the metal subculture. We checked specialized blogs and websites on a regular basis and subscribed to online groups dedicated to metal subculture. We stayed mostly silent on these pages but contributed when the occasion arose. Between October 2012 and March 2013, we also worked with a small group attempting to better coordinate the multiple associations organizing metal concerts in Paris. The project ended around March 2013 as its initiator grew dissatisfied with the general level of involvement within the group. In order to better understand the codes of the community, we listened to a wide range of metal music. This genre indeed comprises very different sub-genres with specific musical and lyrical characteristics. Many metalheads specialize in a limited number of sub-genres and develop a thorough knowledge of their elected style over the years. Our goal in listening to metal was to master the codes that would facilitate communication with the largest number of metalheads.

Unstructured observation is, therefore, an ongoing practice that helps to connect to the scene and build the set of our analysis. We initially failed to capture the importance of keeping a diary systematically describing these observation sessions and interactions. Much of the information we collected between May 2009 and February 2012 was lightly documented. Between February 2012 and May 2014, however, we kept a systematic diary of our participation in concerts and other metal-related activities which, to date, amounts to approximately 50 000 words. Beyond this personal negligence, information collected using such method usually lacks structure and can suffer from the researcher's degree of involvement in the field (Celsi and Olson 1988). Additionally, a metal concert is a very unusual sensory experience. Arnett (1995, p7) defines it as "the sensory equivalent of a war." The sound onslaught, the heat, and ambient darkness can be disorienting and obscure many meaningful signs in the concert house. As such, we had to use methods

that would (1) approach the field more systematically and (2) help to reinstate a certain distance to concert practices[68].

2. Structured observation

As argued in our introduction of semiotics (cf. B. Semiotics as an integrating framework), loudness consumption is to be understood as part of a broader sign system. We used structured observation to describe it's the formal plane of this system in a more systematic way. Inspired by Floch's work on subway travels (Floch 1990, pp19-47), we decided to approach the concert experience as a text. Our objective was to identify the invariants of the concert experience, the features common to most metal concerts. In order to identify these invariants, we first searched to relate the concert experience to a known literary form. Literary genres often have more or less rigid rules under which writers freely imagine their stories. These rules can be considered as the invariants which frame storytelling. Identifying the literary genre metal concerts matches (e.g. murder novel, pulp fiction…) would allow using the codes of the genre to better frame our consumption phenomenon. We did not expect such rules to apply strictly to our context, but rather used this search for correspondence as a creative and imaginative exercise.

Several sessions of unstructured observation revealed that the development and setting of metal concerts displayed interesting similarities with classical theatre. Boileau (1815) defined 5 rules of classical theatre. Three of them can be seen as contextual rules: unity of time, space and action. A central action (around which every other action revolves) is supposed to take place in a single location over one single day. These are three unities that apply particularly well to a concert setting. The central action can be defined as the band

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[68] Seasoned readers of anthropological work, in consumer research and beyond, might wonder how unstructured observation differs from Malinowski's participant observation (Malinowski 1989 [1967]). Participant observation requires a total immersion within the society studied (Deliège 2001). The researcher should live secluded from his family and original culture to better capture the native's point of view. Unfortunately, the metal culture is neither spatially nor temporally secluded. Moreover, every metalhead integrates the music and community in his daily life to a different extent, and in different ways. As such, trying to eat, drink, work, and act metal would certainly lead to an experience quite remote from most metalheads' life. Finally, our goal is less ambitious than Malinowski' as our involvement in the scene primarily aimed at understanding the context of sound consumption, rather than acquiring the ability to speak from the "native's" point of view.

Table 2 – Structured description of the concert

Place	Action	Time	Actors
Pit	Dancing	Before the show outside	Main act
First line	Singing		Supporting act
Back line	Listening	Before the show inside	
			Security guards
Stage	Filming	Intermission	Sellers
Sound booth	Taking pictures	Exit	Roadies
		After the show	Engineers
Bar	Drinking	outside	Stage manager
Shop	Eating		Bartenders
		Supporting act	Cleaning staff
Restrooms	Buying	Main act	
			Spectators
	Waiting		
	Talking		
	Making phone calls		
	Sharing		
	Kissing/Hugging		

performance and this action unfolds in a well-defined time setting and location. We thus proceeded to describe concerts as precisely as possible in terms of time structure, location, action, and characters. The initial description was coarse (see table 2). It was nonetheless useful. The articulation of space, for example, indicates that different worlds cohabit within the concert house. The centrality of the sound booth and stage, inaccessible to spectators and protected by security guards, reminds the roman *cella*, the sanctuary. It is surrounded by but can we explain the coexistence of two antithetical worlds within a single space? How does it make sense for concert-goers?

Our work did not stop at this stage though. To refine our descriptions, we crossed the lines and columns of this initial table. Table 3, for example, focuses on a more specific time and space, the pit during the main act. By choosing a narrower frame, we can identify more nuances regarding the concert experience. The dancing is, for example, broken down in multiple moves that raise new issues. Aggressive punching and kicking contrast with the reciprocal care manifested through metalheads' custom to quickly pick up

any fallen dancer. Similarly, the anarchic rumble we sometimes observed in the pit contrasts with more collective moves involving a coordination of the different dancers. Through this meticulous division of space, time, action and characters, we deconstructed the concert into simple elements (meaningful details) before reconstructing them in a reduced number of conceptual categories. Note that we were not able to cross every entry from the original table. There are thousands possible combinations. Instead, we chose to focus on those that appeared relevant given our unstructured observation sessions and research question. As such, we paid particular attention to the combinations involving "listening." Here, "listening" refers to the overall relation to sound rather than to the specific perception of auditory stimuli.

Table 3 – Structured description of the pit during the main act

Actors	Action	Time	Place
In terms of action Slammers Moshers Lifters Fans, security guards (liminal position)	Punching and kicking Shoving	Suspended (sense of time is distorted)	Flexible (adapts to the number of moshers)
	Stampede Jumps	Prosodic (inflexions given by the band: invectives and songs)	Loose (usually not strictly defined)
	Circle pit		
In terms of costumes Metalheads Polos Shirtless	Wall of death/Braveheart Singing Shouting	Controlled by the band	
	Falling		
	Picking up		
	Lifting		
	Visual and verbal communication		
	Manly embrace		
	Recovering		
	Climbing on-stage		
	(No drinking, few photos and films, few phone calls)		
	Transfer from the pit to the outside by security guards (liminal)		

3. External observer

Resorting to an external observer is a classical method used to increase the validity of qualitative studies (Hill and Stamey 1990). Celsi and Olson (1988) propose to vary the levels of involvement with the activity among the research team. We implemented this recommendation. We were helped in this project by a researcher familiar with neither metal music nor metal concerts. The data was also presented to academics with varying involvement in metal and music in general. Assuming that the scientific background of the observer might impact the scope and depth of observations as well, we included a third observer, a female MBA student unfamiliar with both concerts and scientific methods. She was lightly briefed before the observation session (in order to avoid priming methods or concepts) and debriefed the day after. Her observation logs were kept for future reference and analysis. The result was a series of observations, impressions, and surprises regarding the setting and practices. It was organized in a chronological order following the concert time structure. We were joined by another female observer on different occasions. She was also unfamiliar with the metal music and culture and did not approach the field in any systematic way. We discussed her experience after the concerts she attended and reported our discussion in our field diary.

It must be noted that an external observer is not neutral. She came in the field with prejudices regarding concerts inherited from her teenage years. As such, we had to differentiate two types of data: the factual observations (such as "people drink beer") and their interpretations (such as "people drink beer because they are still teenagers at heart"). While the first type helps to identify new meaningful signs, the second is a different interpretive perspective that can be used to question our own theories.

4. Videography

Our last observation method was based on photo and videography. Researchers in fields such as anthropology and consumer research have emphasized their interest for data collection, analysis, and reporting purposes (Collier and Collier 1987 [1967]; Zaltman 1996; Kozinets 2002; Holbrook 2006). We used videography to draw a clearer separation between data collection and data

analysis. It gave us the opportunity to analyze faithful representations of situations independently from their occurrence. A metal concert is an intense and disorienting experience. There is a temptation in the concert house to focus on the concert most spectacular elements, such as violent dancing or the show itself. Such signs can be comforting as they address direct and clear questions to the observer. However, values are sometimes manifested in more subtle and silent details, which go unnoticed in the concert frenzy.

Using photography does not completely eliminate the risk to focus on the most salient details. In most cases, the photographer chooses a subject or composition she or he deems interesting, framing the picture and approaching its object from a specific angle. We designed two safeguards to limit this bias. First, we took many random shots, pointing the camera in a general direction before pressing the trigger. We reproduced the process from different positions in the concert houses. Although many shots were blurred and unusable, some of them brought an interesting abstract perspective reminding Holbrook's work on photographic close-ups and the mining of minutiae (Holbrook 2006, p490). In this chapter, Holbrook uses photography to stress the need to vary scales in the study of consumption phenomena. We would like to believe our random approach mixed both scales and angles. Second, we used pictures that were taken by other photographers. We tried to focus on photos that (1) had been taken in concerts we had participated in, and (2) by photographers we knew. We believe these two prerequisites gave a sense of context and helped to make sense of these photos.

Pictures convey very detailed and faithful information. They are closer to the object they describe than field notes, for example. However, the academic mode of knowledge creation and representation predominantly involves a textual mediation. We, therefore, had to write about these pictures, to translate them into writing without losing their informative potential. We turned to Barthes' rhetoric of the image and Floch's work on visual identities to make sense of our visual material (Barthes 1964; Floch 1990). Their approach consists in differentiating two iconic layers. The first layer is the literal or denoted image. It corresponds to a relatively naïve and non-cultural

reading of the visual.[69] It describes the perceptual information at a basic level. Consider the French flag, for example. We can describe it as a tricolor rectangle featuring three vertical bands colored blue, white, and red. This description constitutes the visual's denotative meaning. It does not invest the flag with the rich cultural history it stands for and could be achieved by most observers, even those ignorant about the French culture. The second iconic layer is the symbolic image. At this level, the image is decoded and given meaning beyond its initial naïve denotation. Using a code or lexicon learnt through school, we can argue that a multicolor rectangle usually stands for a flag. The specific tricolor combination of blue, white, and red stands for "France," and the blue and red colors refer to the "French revolution" more specifically. This connotative or symbolic meaning, accessible underneath obvious percepts, is our object of investigation. It defines the visual within a broader cultural frame and invests it with richer values which can be related to consumers' individual and collective identities. Note that a single image can have multiple connotations, feature different signs. Some of them are easier to decode than others. Most French citizen will relate the tricolor to its "French" signification. Few will relate it to "revolution."

Approaching an image, there is a risk to focus on its most obvious connotations and miss deeper and potentially richer ones. The denotation-connotation two-step process helps to approach the image more systematically and consider a wider range of potential connotations (Barthes 1964; Floch 1995, pp 43-78). Let us illustrate the method using an example from our field. Consider picture 2. At the denotative level, this picture represents a man and a woman. The man only wears shoes and Bermuda shorts. He is covered in mud from head to toes. He has short hair and what seems to be a mustache. The woman is entirely dressed in black. She wears leather boots, leather pants, and a leather perfecto over a black tank top. She carries a belt pack on her left

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[69] We use the word "relatively non-cultural" because it is likely that any interpreter will already invest cultural meanings in the picture at this stage; in particular if the picture is complex and the observer cannot or does not want to denote an infinite number of pictorial details. As such, Barthes' distinction between a "literal" and "symbolic" image appears theoretically receivable, but practically inconceivable. This point would deserve a much more extended discussion, but it is not directly relevant to our discussion and should not fundamentally challenge our developments

Picture 2 – Two metalheads walking in the mud (cropped)

shoulder. She also carries what appears to be a bottle of shower gel, a dirty but dry towel, and an unlit cigarette. Her hair is neatly arranged into a fringe. Only her boots are spotted with mud. Both characters are walking in the mud and looking in the same direction. Their expression is relatively neutral. This denotative description collects the manifestations which express the symbolic message. We will now work on the connoted image and show how the plastic descriptions we just made make sense in the metal culture. Following Floch's example (Floch 1990, p165), we will first approach this photograph as a "mythogram", as an elaborate sign system deprived of narrative linearity.

The photo lends itself to the exercise. The two characters seem to experience the festival in very different ways. The woman's impeccable clothing and hair style clashes with the man's muddied body and face. Dirty and half-naked, his appearance evokes popular representations of feral children and primitive men. He appears as a careless being in symbiosis with the organic dirt. Conversely, the woman is clean. Her hair is cut in a fashionable way requiring a specific care not to be messed up. The laces of her boots and the leather of her pants tightly compress her legs and feet. Her body is carefully shaped by the clothes she wears. The shampoo and towel she holds contrast with the man's apparently mindless acceptance of dirt and mud. Her

experience, therefore, appears to be characterized by control: control of her body (clothes, hair), control of nature (shampoo, towel), but also of her health and sensations (cigarette). Conversely, the man seems to experience the concert through let-go: let-go of social conventions (dirt, clothing) and let-go of his self (symbiosis with nature through the mud). We therefore propose to define the opposition between "control" and "let-go" as a structural tension underlying the concert experience. This hypothesis should be further supported and challenged by additional methods and substances. To be defined as an invariant structuring the experience, it should be manifested in other photos but also in discourses, texts, and practices. Nonetheless, it provides a starting point to understand the concert experience and sound consumption. Furthermore, note that our purpose here is only illustrative. A complete analysis of this picture would require identifying and relating other signs we could organize in similar oppositions (e.g. sadism and masochism, fashion and anti-fashion, purity and impurity).

The mythographic approach is timeless. It does not consider the "before" and the "after" of the photograph. We argue that studying the picture as a pictogram can complement this approach and lead to richer interpretations. A pictogram is characterized by narrative linearity. It is possible to infer from the picture the actions it precedes and follows (Floch 1995, p50). Such inferences rely on two types of information: the information contained in the picture and the contextual information collected in the field. Let us consider picture 2 again. The man is dirty. We can deduce from the clean look of the woman, the towel, and the shower gel that he is on his way to clean himself, identifying a three step sequence: dirty—cleaning—clean. From our field observations, we know the only way metalheads get that muddied is by diving in the pit during festivals, when the field which welcomes the audience soaked. A handful of metalheads will usually playfully crawl in the mud while the rest of the audience watches. The dirtying is therefore purposive and not just incidental. The sequence can be completed in the following way: clean—dirtying—dirty—cleaning—clean. This sequence emphasizes the transformational nature of the experience. It can be related to and contrasted with various religious facts which play out this sequence, sometimes on a more

symbolic level. Such interpretation reinforces the idea, developed through our structured observation, that the sacred—profane semantic category might underlie the concert experience. While the mythographic approach makes use of semiotics' structural property, the pictographic approach builds on its narrative dimension.[70] They are ultimately complementary and can be used to identify more symbolic nuances in these pictures.[71]

We should finally note a significant difference between the cases we consider and those studied by Floch and Barthes (at least in the works we cited). The advertisements or logos they study are carefully crafted and everything is arranged so that they convey their message as efficiently as possible. As such, they form complete sign systems in which every visual and linguistic element counts. The photos we study are more naturalistic. They are teemed with visual details that did not attract the photographer attention but are still part of the shot. Somebody could idle in the background, for example, as is the case in picture 2. Ultimately, the researcher might re-frame the photo and chose to focus on a limited number of signs. As such, despite their proximity to the material observed, pictures are not a neutral material. The researcher already "stains" them by deliberately separating the significant from the insignificant.

B. Long interviews

We used interviews to complement field observations in two ways. First, they allowed us to approach loudness consumption from an emic perspective, in terms meaningful to the metalheads. From preliminary observation sessions, we were under the impression that many communication attempts might have failed because they misunderstood their target's relation to sound. Observation sessions and first-hand experience can help to grasp this elusive relation. However, interviews offer deeper and more focused accounts. These accounts

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[70] Floch does not talk about mythographic and pictographic approaches. Images are either pictograms or mythograms. We hope our brief presentation shows that, at least based on Leroi Gouhran's definition (Leroi-Gourhan 1982, *in* Floch 1995), they can actually be both at the same time.

[71] We will present the semiotic square in a later section. However, for future reference, it should be noted that the pictographic and mythographic approaches can be used to construct similar squares. They do so with different departure points though. The mythographic approach works primarily on relations by identifying an initial contrariety. The pictographic approach, on the other hand, primarily works on operations.

should not go unquestioned though. They should be contrasted with information collected in the field to secure richer interpretations. Second, if significant challenges are properly tackled, interviews can offer more vivid descriptions of sound consumption. Metalheads have often listened to the music and attended concerts since their teenage years. They have developed a rich relation to the genre and its peculiar sound. Their contribution could therefore bring to consider our issue under new angles and enlighten some intuitions we had developed elsewhere.

Accessing consumers' relation to sound, however, posed a major challenge. It was an elusive object for them as well. We quickly identified different reasons why it might be the case. Metalheads' relation to sound shared many similarities with relations to the sacred (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989). As a consequence, respondents might have been reluctant to profane sound by stripping it from its mystery. Furthermore, this relation appeared very corporeal and its meaning might poorly translate into words (cf. A. A philosophical detour: The ambiguous status of the human body). We, therefore, had overcome two hurdles in the process: both consumers' reluctance and inability to talk about their loudness experience. We designed our interview guide with these two constraints in mind.

Instead of investigating sound directly, we chose to build our interviews around hearing protections and their use. We assumed it would (1) provide a concrete anchor to formulate more abstract reflections on loudness consumption, and (2) help to investigate the issue in a less aggressive fashion. It also gave a direct entry into the issue that had motivated our study. Resorting once again to an optical metaphor, we backlit the relation to sound using hearing protections. Like a silhouette, we expected it would detach from the background created by our conversations on protection issues. This bypass, although necessary, reinforced the probability to face a social desirability bias. Interviewees' tendency to shape their answers in order to give the most positive social image is well-known (Paulhus 1984), but the development of solutions to the problem has mostly been focused on surveys and experimental designs (Mick 1996). We therefore had to design an interview guide which would take this potential bias into account.

In sum, we designed our interviews with three goals in mind: (1) overcoming a possible social desirability bias, (2) helping interviewees to articulate a discourse about elusive but deeply meaningful bodily sensations, and (3) respecting the possibly sacred nature of the sound consumption experience. We chose hearing protections as a background on which our respondents would weave the meaning of sound.

1. Sample

We recruited our informants in three ways. We first identified metalheads through informal social interactions. If they were unfamiliar with the research project, we interviewed them after establishing trust during social events such as parties or concerts. The metal community can be defensive, gladly and playfully confronting individuals and ideas outside the genre (cf. III. Research site: Loudness and the metal community). Sharing such moments helped to overcome this initial defiance. We might argue that it also could have influenced the interview outcome by increasing our respondents' social desirability bias. We acknowledged such possibility and tried to walk the thin line separating these two contrary imperatives. When the compromise was too difficult to reach, e.g. our relation to the potential informant was too close, we opted for not interviewing the respondent. We also recruited metalheads by posting ads in magazines dedicated to the metal music and culture, as well as specialized and non-specialized internet forums. We usually interviewed these respondents without preliminary meetings. In such cases, we took some time to get to know each other before the interview started. We finally recruited respondents using a snowballing sampling technique. We asked the metalheads we knew if they could connect us to other members of the scene that might be interested in participating.

Our sample was comprised predominantly of young white males, ranging from 22 to 38 years old, but also included two female metalheads aged 28 and 33. Several factors motivated such a demographic composition. Such sample adequately represents the genre demographics. Metal is predominantly a white, male, heterosexual, and young subculture (Weinstein 2000 [1991], pp 102-117). Despite evolving demographics, which we will discuss in our

111

findings, we did observe such a composition in most concerts. Our specific focus on young *adults*, instead of teenagers notably, answered representativeness and conceptual preoccupations. While ethnographies of the 1990s frequently framed metal consumption as a teenage phenomenon (Arnett 1996; Weinstein 2000 [1991], pp106-111), we discovered a different reality during our fieldwork. Many of the concert-goers we observed appeared older, with a large group of consumers spread between their mid-twenties and mid-thirties. Furthermore, as young adults who had been involved in metal for 5 years and more, most of the participants we interviewed had had time to negotiate, over the years, their relation to loudness, self-protection, and self-destruction. As a consequence, we had the opportunity, through careful interviewing, to understand how their present position had formed and evolved over time. Focusing on teenagers would have undoubtedly been interesting, but would have offered fewer opportunities to discuss the complex long-term negotiation processes which result in the adoption or rejection of protection solutions.

We also made sure to interview consumers interested in a wide range of metal subgenres in order to (1) facilitate the identification of invariants within the broader subculture, but also to (2) get opportunities to contrast practices and discourses across consumption contexts. Finally, we did not specify criteria defining metalheads, but relied upon our respondents' self-categorization. Although our respondents differed with respect to their knowledge and involvement in the music, they had all participated in concerts of bands widely regarded as being metal acts. We collected 14 interviews, in total. The full detail of our sample is available in table 4.

2. Structure and projective square

Our interviews were divided into three segments: warm-up, preliminary exploration, and projective exploration. The warm-up was designed to get a better understanding of our respondents' music and concert consumption, gain trust, and establish rapport. This stage was particularly important as it gave us the opportunity to manifest our respect for the culture. After some time, we eased into the interview and started recording our interactions after permission

Table 4 – Composition of our sample

Name	Age	Occupation	Preferred subgenres	Involvement in the subculture
Alex	21	Unemployed musician	Drone, experimental metal, black metal	Active musician, guitarist and multi-instrumentalist
Antoine	29	Unemployed legal expert	Post black metal, stoner	Previously bass player in a stoner band
Baptiste	25	Audio plugin designer	Heavy metal, melodic death metal, groove metal	None Musician in a reggae band
Dimitri	28	Municipal employee in charge of sports and youth	Black metal	Currently inactive Previously singer in black metal members and member/founder of various associations
David	38	Publisher	Industrial	None Musician, producer, and label owner of experimental and concrète electronic music
FX	29	Lawyer	Groove metal, thrash, melodic metal	Hobbyist guitar player
Jean-Baptiste	27	Programmer	Symphonic metal	None
John	31	Municipal employee, technical services	Viking metal, folk metal, black metal	Co-founder and active member of Battle's Beer (fanzine, distro, and concert organization)
Mech	27	Web designer	Symphonic metal (declining interest)	Hobbyist guitar player
Nico	33	Primary school physical educator	Groove metal, hard rock, thrash	Active guitarist and singer
Olivier	34	Movie producer	Progressive metal, industrial	Previously synthesizer player
Sandrine	28	Municipal employee, administrative function	Folk metal, viking metal, death metal, black metal	Co-founder and active member of Battle's Beer (fanzine, distro, and concert organization)
Sylvia	33	Unemployed public relations manager	Groove metal, thrash metal, progressive metal	Active singer
Thomas	24	Programmer	Folk metal	None

was granted. The preliminary exploration consisted in an investigation of "obvious" reasons for not using earplugs (convenience, accessibility, hygiene…). These "obvious" reasons had been identified beforehand through introspection and unstructured observation. They were completed as new insights were gained from previous interviews. Techniques such as false naiveté or description of a third party or situation were used to limit the amount of threat posed to the respondent and broaden the possible fields of investigation.

The rest of our interview focused on the construction and discussion of a symbolic square (Guelfand 1999). The symbolic square can be attached to the methodological field of projective methods, and more specifically to the subfield of metaphorical approaches. Rook (2006) offers a thorough review of these approaches' benefits and constraints. We will only focus on those which are the most relevant to our project. First, projective methods can help respondents to retrieve information which is unstructured such as impressions of emotionality or the meaning of a particular consumption episode. We assume that sound consumption meaning is a typical example of unstructured information, its encoding being corporeal as much as semantic (Howes 2011). Second, projective techniques can help respondents to articulate their discourse. While consumers might perfectly know what sound consumption means to them, they nonetheless might have difficulties to translate this sensitive knowledge into words. Projective techniques can help to operate this translation by providing a medial object, in our case a mental image, which will serve as a support for elaborating richer discourse. Finally, using images or symbols can help overcome consumers' self-disclosure proclivities. Consumers are usually less prone to distort their responses when questioning is indirect and playful. Moreover, given the potentially sacred nature of the sound consumption experience, working on images can help to talk about the object in depth without stripping it from its mystery.

The specific technique we used, the symbolic square, was designed by Guelfand (1999). It could be described as a structural projective technique. Guelfand proposes to enrich meaning by reconstructing and considering the relations binding different images and their signification. The first relation

opposes positive to negative images. It represents what interviewees think and feel is positive and negative about the product or experience. These associations are called actualizations. They can be understood as the direct effect of using hearing protections. Jean-Baptiste, for example, compares hearing protections to the piano *una corda* or soft pedal. They make the sound softer and more enjoyable, especially if it was initially too loud and poorly set. But these actualizations are insufficient for Guelfand. They only reveal part of the consumer's relation to the product or object of study and might lead to erroneous conclusions. In our example, despite this positive association, Jean-Baptiste leans towards not using hearing protections. Guelfand proposes to work on the images contradicting these initial actualizations. The resulting images and associations are labeled potentializations. They represent what the product's actualizations prevent from experiencing, either positively or negatively. For Jean-Baptiste, the cathedral organ contradicted the piano soft pedal. He considered that hearing protection prevented from experiencing the physical and acoustic vibrations, the resonance, and intensity of the music. The square therefore organizes images and their signification along two axes. The horizontal axis discriminates the positive from the negative while the vertical one separates actualizations (top quadrants) from potentializations (bottom quadrants).

Let us illustrate the method with a concrete example. The case used is particularly interesting as the respondent had never used hearing protections and appeared unwilling to talk about it during the preliminary exploration. The construction of the square can be divided into three stages: (1) image generation, (2) image description and, (3) elaboration based on these descriptions. First, we asked Franck, our respondent, what images hearing protections and their use evoked. These images are summarized in table 5's first line and organized according to the positive, negative, or neutral connotation it carried for Franck[72]. Their relation constitutes the basic symbolic tension underlying Franck's conception of hearing protections. Fortunately, images came quite spontaneously to him. It is important that

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[72] Guelfand does not consider cases when the image might be neutral. However, we found such addition to be necessary to accommodate situations in which an image was neither positive nor negative or both at the same time.

Table 5 – Example of generated square

	Positive	Negative
Actualizations	Cachou (black catechus) box	Old teacher with a mustache Précieuse literature Pompier (academic) symphony
	Contradiction of the positive	**Contradiction of the negative**
Potentializations	Vitamin C square box	Sid Vicious Innate literary style String quartet

respondents generate these images as automatically as possible, without discursive mediation. This spontaneity is central to associative techniques and greatly contributes to their rich outcome. Nonetheless, some respondents had difficulties to generate these iconic metaphors. We sometimes helped them in two ways. We provided exemplar categories they might pick their analogies from (e.g. "What if the earplugs were another object? An animal? A TV show?). We also tried to identify what type of medium they might be comfortable with and used it in this generation phase. For example, if our respondent was a movie enthusiast, we would ask her or him to imagine that earplugs and their use were censored. In such a case, what type of scene would they film in order to convey the idea and sensation of using earplugs? Still working in this generation phase, we asked Franck what images would be opposed to the one he had just mentioned[73]. Note that these new images appear more remote from hearing protections than the first ones. They are generated not in relation to the object itself, but in relation to its visual metaphors.

During the second stage, Franck described each of these images in details relevant to him. In our example, the old teacher with a mustache was described as "old, "comforting", "stay-at-home" and "respectful of morality" while Sid Vicious, the Sex Pistols' (in)famous bass player, was described as "young", "fool hardy", "agitator", "fashionable" and "conveying a sense of

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[73] Typical questions related to our example would be "What images would you oppose to an old teacher with a mustache? What images strikes you as opposed to an old teacher with a mustache?"

emergency." During this stage, the respondent translates mental images into words. This translation is detrimental but necessary. Words only offer an imperfect equivalence for images and meaning gets thinned out in the process. This translation is nonetheless given (1) the dominance of textual modes of representation and discussion in academia, and (2) the symbolic square own logic.

Indeed, the objective of the third stage is to link these textual descriptions back to the object or situation that evoked them in the first place. We therefore asked Franck *if* and *how* they applied to hearing protections and their use. In some cases, the respondent could not see any relation between the given description and earplug use. In these rare occasions, we dropped these images and their related qualifiers. Building on the old teacher metaphor, Franck described earplugs as an incursion of a parental, moralizing universe in a teenage world that rejects them. They offered a reassuring but unwelcomed protection softening the violence of live music. Other images and qualifiers (précieuse literature, cachou box…) triggered different but sometimes overlapping representations. Note that, by construction, upper and lower frame descriptions will not apply to the object in a similar way. Upper frames correspond to "realized" positive and negative representations regarding the object. They can be understood as the direct effect of using earplugs. Lower frames correspond to "potentialized" positive and negative representations about the phenomenon. It is what it prevents from experiencing. For instance, thinking about his description of Sid Vicious, Franck described earplugs as a barrier to enter the realm of silliness and carefreeness. Earplugs barred the access to the "dumb" dimension of punk usually granted by detrimentally loud music.

C. The semiotic square

The methods we have presented so far were primarily used to collect richer data[74]. Their goal was to describe the sound consumption and the concert experience in more details. Ultimately, they all aim at a richer understanding of

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[74] Except for the videographic analysis which involves extended interpretation at the connotation stage (cf. 4. Videography).

consumers' relation to sound. To complete this study, however, we had to integrate this rich but diverse data into synthetic interpretations. Floch (1988, 1990) has clearly illustrated how semiotic squares, also known as Greimas squares, can help to harmoniously and systematically integrate protean manifestations of stable but abstract connotations, values, and valorizations. From an interpretive point of view, we could consider the construction of a semiotic square to be a rigorous game that allows and to some extent, forces the interpreter to consider the different manifestations collected in the field under a plurality of angles. As such, we argue that they constitute powerful ways to secure rich but actionable interpretations of loudness consumption.

Our objective in this section is twofold. First, we will introduce and illustrate the principles driving the semiotic square construction and use. This introduction should give our readers the conceptual keys necessary to understand our developments and their theoretical underpinning. Second, we will take this occasion to introduce the specific square which will structure our findings presentation. Over the course of our study, we used multiple squares offering alternative entries into the issue of loudness consumption. However, we decided to organize our discussions around the let-go—control square. Using this specific square to illustrate the method will (1) acquaint our readers with our interpretive framework, and should (2) clarify the reasons why we chose this particular focus. We will refer back to the photograph we studied in cf. 4. Videography to illustrate our developments.

1. Let-go—control: Defining an initial contrariety

A semiotic square represents graphically the logical articulation of a semantic category (Floch 1988 1990; Greimas and Courtès 1993 [1979]). Through logical operations of negation and assertion, it develops an initial opposition or contrariety (in our case, the opposition of let-go and control) into a richer system of relations including the contradictory terms of the primary semantic category (i.e. the terms no-control and no-let-go). The design of a semiotic square, therefore, begins with the identification and definition of an initial semantic axis or contrariety.

118

A contrariety is a relation of opposition between two terms which presuppose each other (Greimas and Courtès 1993 [1979], p69). In our Western culture, the oppositions between life and death, black and white, woman and man, or loud and quiet constitute such contrarieties. Loudness, for example, takes its meaning from its opposition to quietness, and conversely. We argue that the

Figure 2 – Let-go—Control semantic axis

"Not wearing clothes"	"Wearing tight clothes"
"Being covered in mud"	"Clean, structured hair dress" "Cleaning"
	"Smoking"
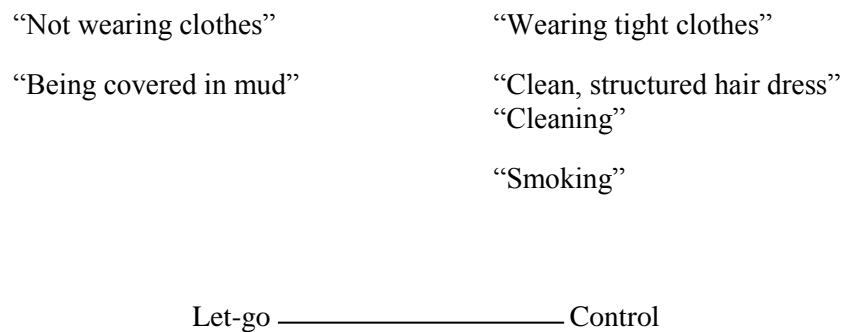
Let-go ——————————— Control

meanings of control and let-go rest upon such a contrariety. Considering picture 2, the female metalhead's decision to wear tight leather clothes can be said to manifest control only to the extent that it implies a submission of her body. Conversely, letting go presupposes relaxing an existing constraint, such as the social constraint of hygiene and cleanliness which would urge someone not to jump in a puddle of mud (cf. the muddied man). These simple examples are meant to illustrate the intertwinement, or reciprocal presupposition, of these two terms. This semantic axis or contrariety, as simple as it is, can be used to organize our initial observations (figure 1). Note that Figure 1, despite its simplicity, builds upon the generative and structural principles underlying semiotics. The horizontal axis is a visual representation of a relation structuring meaning (i.e. a relation of contrariety) while we vertically relate the complex programmes of action (such as "smoking" or "cleaning") to the significations, values, and valorizations they manifest (i.e. let-go and control).

Picture 2-Two metalheads walking in the mud (cropped)

A major issue while designing a semiotic square is to decide on an initial semantic axis. Looking at picture 2, why not setting man—woman as our initial contrariety? Or blond hair—brown hair? These are, indeed, contrarieties this photograph represents. Motivating our decision is all the more important that we present and discuss our entire finding section with respect to the let-go—control square. Floch (1998) provides two guidelines that should drive this choice. The axis chosen needs to (1) provide a minimal organization of the verbal and non-verbal discourses available, and (2) be relevant to the situation or problem studied. Said otherwise, how much of the concert experience can we categorize using this dichotomy? To what extent does this categorization help to understand our object of study? The choice of an axis should, therefore, accommodate a tension between (1) a level of generality which will allow making sense of a wide variety of discourses and practices, and (2) a level of precision which will allow deriving insightful and relevant conclusions regarding a specific issue.

Building on Floch's invitation, we present three reasons why the let-go—control contrariety constitutes a relevant and potentially powerful entry into the study of loudness consumption in the metal community and music.

Theoretical motivation. Recent ethnographies and musicological studies of the metal culture all describe, albeit in different terms, the interplay of let-go and control as a tension underlying the genre identity, performance, and experience. Weinstein (1991 [2000]) places the chaotic and Dyonisiac experience of power at the heart of the genre. During concerts, the music, and the sheer volume of its performance, contributes to empower listeners who let go through ecstatic trances while releasing the norms of everyday social life (Weinstein 1991 [2000], p213-217). In another seminal study of the genre, Berger (1999, pp251-275), studying the Akron (Ohio) death metal community using practice theory, argues that metal provides a much needed sense of individual and communal empowerment in the post-industrialized era. Combining ethnography and new musicology, Walser (1993, p2) finally presents the musical articulation of power as "the most important single factor in the experience of heavy metal" (p2). For him, the music and the culture that surrounds it offer an occasion to experience a dialectics of freedom and control, of escape and reintegration. This dialectics underlies the music, its production (i.e. composition, material production, and live performance) and consumption, be it at home or in concert settings (Walser 1993). Extending Walser's reflection to extreme metal subgenres, Kahn-Harris (2007, p48-49) places the tension between transgression and control at the core of the genre definition. This articulation, he argues, is musical, discursive, and somatic. The enjoyment of metal music, especially in live settings where sound levels are pushed to extraordinary levels, calls upon performers' and listeners' discipline. The extremeness and transgressive character of the music and its culture constantly flirt with the abject, forcing consumers and producers alike to maintain a tight control over themselves. The notions of let-go and control integrates adequately these different conceptions. They echo quite directly Walser's or Kahn-Harris' dialectics but also open up the field of power by taking into account its two-sidedness. As such, the let-go—control contrariety

is supported by existing studies of the field but also offers an opportunity to gather these studies under an overarching framework.

Empirical motivation. Early in our field work, the let-go—control contrariety appeared to satisfy Floch's objective of parsimony (Floch 1990, 29-30), i.e. that it offered a minimal organization of discourses and practices observed in the concert house. Numerous behaviors in the concert place appeared as forms of aesthetic, psychological, and social control or let-go. Aesthetically speaking, the critical conversations that often followed concerts signaled participants' motivation to control the sound and musical rendition quality. Conversely, some consumers' desire for musical improvisation, highlighted in different interviews, reflected a willingness to be surprised and let their aesthetic expectations go. The concert place itself appeared as a space of alternative social rules. The audience and performers frequently transgressed established social norms through violent dances, curses, spits, and hurling obscenities, for example. However, the community concurrently sanctioned participants if they did not abide by some alternative rules, e.g. if their violent dancing did not take the proper form. Finally, concert participants appeared to exert control over other individuals at a physical level by punching, pulling, and pushing each other while letting go through ecstatic and meditative trances[75]. The observations presented here are obviously very brief and disparate stubs. They only illustrate the types of preliminary observations which motivated our further investigation of the let-go—control category. We could have selected many additional manifestations of this tension in our field notes. We voluntarily stay at this embryonic stage, however. Our findings chapters will discuss our observation in much more depth, which should further reinforce the relevance of this category.

Opportunistic motivation. Finally, we should note that we also focused on the let-go—control contrariety because it gave us the opportunity to put consumer health psychology's discourse in perspective quite directly. As argued in our theoretical section (cf. III. The cult of control), the opposition and, more specifically, the contradiction of these two terms underlies the research stream

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[75] We will come back to these considerations while presenting our findings.

approach to health and the body. As such, although we had taken an interest in the let-go—control contrariety before we reviewed the consumer health literature, discovering this common theme reinforced our interest in the dichotomy.

2. Building the square: Negation and assertion

Building on the structural property of semiotics (cf. 1. A structural approach: Meaning comes from relations), the Greimas square develops an initial contrariety, in our case the let-go—control opposition, into a richer semiotic system. The basic premise of the square construction is that the value of particular terms (e.g. let-go and control) can be understood in more depth and breadth when considered in a richer semiotic system. This interpretive method requires the semiotician to develop an initial contrariety through operations of negation and assertion into a more elaborate, and yet parsimonious, system of relations. The resulting square constitutes the graphical representation of the basic articulation of the semantic category studied (see figure 2). The goal of the square being to secure more contrasted interpretations, we propose to illustrate its principles and power by reconsidering the photograph we used to exemplify our videographic analysis. Using a two-step denotation→connotation approach, we had concluded that the mudded man appeared to experience the concert by letting go while the neatly dressed woman was engaged in a much more controlled experience.

A contradiction is a type of opposition which relates one term from a pre-defined category (e.g. control) to the term negating its characteristic attributes (i.e. non-control). In a contrariety, the presence of a term (e.g. control) implies the presence of its contrary (i.e. let-go). Conversely, in a contradiction, the presence of a term presupposes the absence of the other. The position "non-control" is therefore characterized by the absence of control. From an individual perspective, the collective factors which frame and condition the experience of loudness (e.g. the way other consumers sing along to a song) could be considered to manifest the absence of control underlying

Figure 3 – Let-go—Control semiotic square

—— Contrariety	
- - -▶ Contradiction	
—▶ Complementarity	

Let-go ————————— Control

Not Control ————————— Not Let-go

Alea   *Agon*
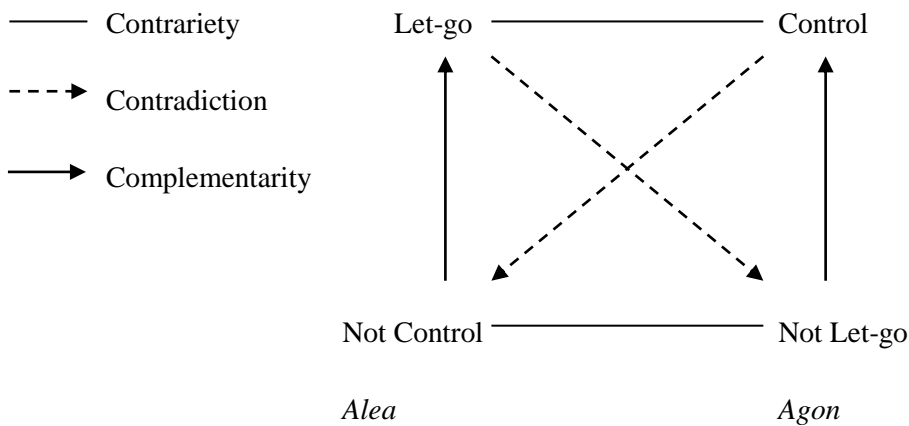
the consumption experience. Although it is not always possible, it can be helpful, from an interpretive standpoint, to lexicalize the terms obtained through the operation of negation. Building on Caillois' study of play behaviors (Caillois 1967 [1958], p56), we propose to lexicalize non-control as "alea." In Caillois' classification, alea refers to any game in which the player has no control on the outcome. In such games, the player is not expected to prevail over a specific adversary as much as fate itself. The lottery and the roulette rest upon such alea. This theoretical *bricolage* is facilitated by the recreational and play-like appearance of the concert experience.

Taking this new position into consideration entices us to examine the aleatory connotations and values visually manifested in picture 2. Our denotation—connotation analysis highlighted that the woman appeared to strictly control her experience, notably through the way she dressed and managed her body. However, on a different level, her experience can also be described as aleatory.[76] Her dress code and hair strictly abide by the genre fashion. Weinstein (2000 [1991]; p207) argues convincingly that metalheads attending concerts are expected to achieve a sense of community, notably through the adoption of a "uniform." The color black, leather fabric, and perfecto constitute possible elements of this uniform, an idea which was

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[76] "Aleatory" here refers to a lack of control and not to randomness as it is usually understood. A random valorization of loudness might convey the idea that relations to loudness are unmotivated and to a large degree contingent. By using the term "alea," we want to underscore that although some behaviors might manifest a non-control from a given perspective (e.g. individual), they are nonetheless strongly motivated and determined if we consider different perspectives (e.g. collective).

supported through structured and unstructured observation. Consequently, our character appears to decide what to wear only within the strict boundaries of the metal fashion code. As such, her behavior can be described as partly aleatory, i.e. escaping her control. This re-interpretation of picture 2 underscores the importance of specifying the frame of analysis adopted while interpreting and assigning values to specific consumption practices. In our example, the use of tight leather fabric can be considered a manifestation of control in the female metalhead's relation to her body. This very practice, however, is also a manifestation of non-control when we shift our focus from the individual/body to the community/individual frame.

Having defined a first contradictory term (i.e. non-control or alea), we pursue our square's construction by defining, lexicalizing, and illustrating its last term: non-let-go. This fourth position is obtained by negating the characteristic attributes of let-go. Again, we propose to refer to Caillois' typology of games to lexicalize this position. Caillois uses the term "agon" to categorize games involving a competition, a fight in which chances are created so that the rivals can compete on an equal footing (Caillois 1967 [1958], pp50-51). Agon is, therefore, characterized by a resistance, a refusal to let-go, and an attempt to influence an outcome. It is an expression of power which is unresolved. It is not control as much as an attempt to apply a control. Referring back to our initial interpretation of picture 2, the muddied and half-naked man's experience appeared mainly characterized by let-go (cf. 4. Videography). Watching these metalheads diving in the mud pointed towards a form of youthful exuberance and carelessness which playfully violated established boundaries (e.g. norm of cleanliness). However, a closer investigation reveals an agonistic dimension in this practice. Looking at the uncropped picture 2 bis, the man stands out. He is the only person completely covered in mud. His transgression of mainstream social conventions, a practice highly regarded in the metal community (Kahn-Harris 2007, p129), is apparent and complete. As such, the collective mud diving that usually takes place in the pit, a space dedicated to confrontation, can also be interpreted as an agonistic race to be the dirtiest and most negligent metalhead. Other consumption patterns, such as massive alcohol consumption or exposure to deafening sound levels, echo this

Picture 2 bis – Two metalheads walking in the mud (uncropped)

practice. Metalheads sometimes wear tales of intoxication as badges of honor.[77] Ultimately, there appears to be a fine line between agon and let-go, a line we should look out for while interpreting the concert and sound consumption experience.

Taken together, the agon and alea terms form the square's sub-contrary axis. Like control and let-go, they constitute a binary opposition whose terms are defined through reciprocal presupposition. This logical property of the square construction can help to develop richer and more rigorous interpretations. These interpretations should satisfy not one, but two logical relations to make sense from a semiotic perspective. Our previous interpretations appear to respect this logic. As emphasized by Caillois (1967 [1958], p58), agonistic confrontations presuppose the existence of rules which create equal chances among players. Participants should accept these rules, i.e. accept the aleatory dimension of the game, to allow for a fair competition. The performance takes its meaning and value from the rules that constrain it. There would be little praise of a cheater who would score by breaking these rules. The player, to enter the competition, needs to acknowledge his absence of control on some dimensions of the game. In the case we observe, the community provides these codes. Mud diving, despite its chaotic appearance,

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[77] This race to let-go needs to be mitigated though. The metal community values a delicate balance between let-go and control that we will further investigate in our findings section.

is a regulated activity. The types of dives, the relations between participants, the place and time where it can happen are scripted, even so loosely. Respecting this script, or non-control, conditions the prowess of divers and its acknowledgement by the community. Reciprocally, when we define some dressing practices as aleatory, we assume a contrary position which would refuse these stylistic codes, even if such positions are not manifested within the concert house. The respect of this fashion makes sense only when confronted to a potential disrespect.

The last relations defining our square are relations of implications or complementarity. Implications are asymmetrical relations of conjunction obtained through the assertion of the square's sub-contrary terms. In our case, the term control implies agon, but agon does not necessarily imply control. Not letting go is a necessary but insufficient condition for control. For instance, we can posit that by cleaning himself (cf. the towel and soap), the muddied man will regain control over his body. He will get rid of the mud which dirties and sticks to his torso, legs, and so on. Simultaneously, the abstract control of civilization, enacted through norms of cleanliness, will be reasserted, two ideas we had introduced in our denotation→connotation analysis. However, regaining control will, first, require confronting, in a figurative sense, this dirtiness. It will require an agonistic valorization of dirt as something to be faced and dealt with. Control therefore implies agon. Even after showering, however, mud might still stick to the metalhead's hair and skin, taking a few days before peeling off. The muddied man might also not aim at complete control, removing the bulk of the mud, but staying voluntarily dirty as a way to remind and manifest his agonistic experience. In both cases, confronting this dirtiness will not necessarily result in a complete control. This apparently trivial and literal illustration of non-reciprocal presupposition invites to consider to what extent, and under which modalities, the symbolic and spiritual rejuvenation experienced through mud diving lingers with the metalheads who perform mud dives. Addressing such an issue would offer an opportunity to consider the ways these metalheads articulate the animal (mud, dirtiness) and the civilized (soap, cleanliness) in their metal experience, a theme core to consumer health psychology. Obviously, we should not derive conclusions

from such a brief discussion. We should look fok other spiritual manifestations of spiritual control, let-go, agon, and alea to comfort, qualify, or refute these initial analyses. However, we hope this introduction emphasizes how the semiotic square might help to do so by representing and forcing to play with the multiple relations which constitute meaning.

Unfolding the semantic axis we had used to organize our observations, we, therefore, came to operate a partial reversal in the interpretation of our two characters' experience. These latest interpretations are not truer than the initial ones. They only approach the picture and its connotations from a different angle. As argued in the introduction to our methodology, this variety of perspectives should help to build richer and more actionable theories about sound, health, self-destruction, and the body.

3. Some clarifications

Before we present our findings, we should, finally, clarify several points regarding semiotic squares, in general, and the let-go—control square, in particular. First, in this section, we presented what might be considered the canonical way to construct a square: identification of a contrariety developed through sequential operations of negation and assertion, resulting in the production of relations of contradiction and implication. However, actual constructions usually imply playing around with concepts and relations much more, sometimes starting from a relation of implication or contradiction. These alternative modes of construction urge to consider how to present these squares. For didactical purposes, we will take and motivate this decision a chapter at the time. We will, for example, see that it is sometimes more relevant to start an analysis with the sub-contrary axis or to focus on a single term and consider all the relations which emanate from it.

Secondly, as should be clear from our illustrations, working around a square invites to consider the dynamics of signifying practices. A specific practice or discourse cannot be mapped on a position of the square once and for all. We, for example, showed how dressing in tight leather could be interpreted as alea, control, or let-go depending on the system of signs in which the practice is considered. We should, therefore, pay specific attention to the ways these

systems differ across contexts and consumption occasions (time, place, performer...). Furthermore, we should emphasize that the terms which constitute our square are pure ideals. It is rare for consumption patterns to point towards a clear and single signification or value. For example, we will see that the spiritual value of the loudness experience lies precisely in its ability to manifest simultaneously control and the transgression of this control (cf.

Chapter VI: Transgressing boundaries: Loudness as a sacred experience). Metal consumers' ambivalent positions towards loudness, self-destruction, and protection compel the study of these complex positions.

We should also note that not all positions within a square are necessarily manifested in practice or discourse. Semiotic squares are logical constructions. Although their initial axes, often a contrariety, are usually grounded in empirical observations, the positions defined through conceptual developments sometimes fail to manifest. Again, the square construction is an invitation to approach issues under a different angle. It does not imply that every angle will be relevant to our analysis or make sense in our context. We should, therefore, be cautious to substantiate our abstract developments through fieldwork and interviewing. We might not always be able to provide interview extracts to illustrate underlying relations. However, in such cases, we should emphasize how the broader culture and performance of the genre can be interpreted as manifestations of these relations.

Let us, finally, bring two clarifications regarding the specific let-go—control square. First, although we borrowed the terms "alea" and "agon" from Caillois' study of play behaviors (Caillois 1967 [1958]), our readers should not systematically look at the concert experience and its performance as a game. Although it is sometimes play-like, concert consumption also overflows the conventional understanding of games as purely recreational and free activities (Caillois 1967 [1958], pp42-44). We abstract and re-contextualize the notions we borrow from Caillois. We reduce their signification to a minimum (i.e. non-control and non-let-go) before developing them within the community we consider. Second, although we mentioned this point earlier, we should remind that the let-go—control square is not the only square we used in our investigation. We developed various contrarieties we had derived from our observation such as the oppositions between pleasure and displeasure, ordinariness and extraordinariness, knowledge and ignorance, or purity and impurity. We were, however, able to integrate most of these reflections in the analysis of the let-go control square.

Chapter IV: Epistemic and self-transformative valorizations of loudness' destructive potential

Suggested listening:

- Judas Priest – Painkiller (1992)
- Slipknot – Wait and Bleed (1999)
- Nine Inch Nails – Hurt (1995)

Extreme sound levels are unhealthy. By degrading the inner ear, they can ultimately cause hearing loss, tinnitus, and deafness (http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/).[78] Although charities increasingly mention the social and emotional consequences such degradation can have (e.g. http://www.who.int/),[79] physiological dysfunctions usually comes first in their discourses. They precede and cause broader and sometimes more dramatic difficulties. Paradoxically, extreme sounds work quietly as they can take years for their full effect to be experienced (http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/).[80] Public policy-makers, therefore, struggle to instill a sense of urgency in their communications. While the dire consequences of extreme sound consumption might only be felt in the future, the physiological battle unfolds right as consumers participate in concert and clubbing activities. This insistence on the physiological degradation at play will make an excellent departure point for our developments. The centrality of this argument in public health discourses will allow, and to some extent require, considering its reception by metalheads. Such investigation will offer a first way to (1) relate and contrast the meanings policy-makers and metalheads ascribe to loudness, its consumption, and consequences, and to (2) assess the efficacy of such discourses.

Loudness has clear medical connotations for metal consumers. All the concert-goers we interviewed, formally and informally, were aware about extreme sound levels destructive potential. With varying degrees of scientism

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78 http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/pages/noise.aspx
79 http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs300/en/index.htm
80 http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/your-hearing/about-deafness-and-hearing-loss/types-and-cause-of-hearing-loss/noise.aspx

and precision, they described the tinnitus and hearing loss live music can cause. These connotations rarely came first in our talks. Metalheads usually discussed loudness in musical or spatial terms. Moreover, our interview guide, centered on hearing protections, might have inflated consumers' references to the physiological. Nonetheless, most adult consumers had assimilated the rhetoric of health and self-preservation omnipresent in public discourses about sound consumption. Some respondents even acknowledged directly public institutions' role in increasing hearing protections' use within the concert house.

This observation is both hopeful and puzzling from a political standpoint. It appears current efforts to curb hearing loss have succeeded in educating consumers about (1) extreme sound levels' destructive potential and (2) the solutions available to prevent its realization.[81] However, it also points out that such education is insufficient. Information is not persuasion; and many metal consumers, aware of these risks, keep listening to live concerts unprotected. In this section, we will work to better understand how consumers construe and value loudness from a physiological perspective. We argue that beyond the manifest, shared understanding of loudness' consequences actually lie diverse valorizations of its destructive potential. We argue that taking such diversity into account will help to build upon the successful educational groundwork that has been achieved so far. This medical focus is only an entry point. Our next chapters will underscore that it does not exhaust the values metalheads ascribe to loudness. However, this approach will give us the opportunity to address relatively directly the discourses and meanings articulated by public policy-makers.

In the next pages, we will consider how consumers valorize loudness' destructive potential. Concretely, we will work on the values metalheads ascribe to the physiological degradation of their inner ear. Such approach will require considering the symptoms such degradation can cause (e.g. hearing

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[81] We should clarify this statement. While most consumers know that hearing protections can prevent hearing loss, knowledge about the range of solutions existing (types of protections) is more limited. Communicating on the variety of solutions available might increase trials and adoptions, a point we will further develop in the next chapters.

loss and tinnitus). From a semiotic perspective, we might interpret these symptoms as complex manifestations of more abstract underlying pathologies; and we will emphasize that it is partly through these somatic symptoms that consumers come to reinterpret and re-evaluate loudness' self-destructive potential, as well as their relation to self-destruction and their body. We will address this issue from four related perspectives derived from our let-go—control semiotic square. We will dedicate our first section to the agon—alea sub-contrary axis (cf. I. Denial of power and responsibility). This contrariety contrasts a relatively direct and willful confrontation of loudness destructive potential (agon) with a mindless submission to its violence (alea). We believe this tension summarizes adequately popular representations of the metal community, especially in its relations to health issues and responsibility. We will, however, mitigate this representation and emphasize how most metal consumers ultimately transcend these passive positions to assume more active and self-reflexive stances towards sonic self-destruction (cf. II. Damage control, damage acceptance). In conclusion, we will argue that loudness consumption participates in a perpetual self-exploration process through which consumers search, negotiate, push, transgress, accept and negate the limits of their body (cf. III. Conclusion).

I. Denial of power and responsibility

As a departure point to our analysis, we propose to contextualize the definitions of agonistic and aleatory valorizations with respect to this chapter's object of study: loudness destructive potential. In this framework, and in line with the definition we gave of these positions (cf. 2. Building the square: Negation and assertion), an agonistic valorization would imply a willful confrontation of sound's destructiveness, an attempt to overcome loudness' deleterious power, a willingness to face the sonic violence, a refusal to yield to its power. Contrarily, an aleatory valorization of loudness' destructive potential would imply construing this destructiveness as escaping the consumer's control (i.e. a non-control). It would not imply yielding to loudness' destructive potential as much as failing to acknowledge one's ability, or opportunity, to control it.

Reflecting on our discussions with metalheads, purely agonistic and aleatory valorizations of loudness destructive potential appear as ideal constructions with only partial empirical support. Most our respondents appeared to have departed from such positions to develop valorizations closer to the let-go—control axis. We nonetheless considered it might be interesting to address them for three reasons. First, we believe they reflect the mindlessness and recklessness outsiders often attribute to the metal community; and metalheads often play out these qualities, especially when pitched against mainstream society. This approach might therefore provide some keys to better understand occasional self-destructive discourses that surface in various media. Our reader should, however, keep in mind that these discourses might be disconnected from (1) actual practices, and (2) the discourses metal consumers hold within the community. Second, we argue that these valorizations can help to understand the ways some younger consumers relate to loudness destructive potential. As we discussed protective behaviors with adult metalheads, we sometimes had the opportunity to glimpse at their entry into the genre and initial relation to loudness. Finally, while these ideal positions are usually not directly manifested in adult consumers' discourses, they tend to subtly reappear and can help to understand metalheads' complex and sometimes contradictory relations to loudness.

A. Agonistic valorization

Upon entering the concert house and being assaulted by performers' heavy music, the agonistic valorization of loudness makes immediate sense. The consumer would confront and try to overcome the sound tremendous destructive power, throwing her or his body against the repeated sound waves hammered by the band. Loudness makes for an interesting foe. Its brutality is manifest. It is awe-inspiring, engulfing and multi-sensorial. It assaults the consumer aurally and corporeally. It rushes through the auditory canal and passes through the skin, punching internal organs along the way. In this gigantic struggle, loudness does not leave the consumer unarmed. Walser (1993, pp44-45) argues that metal's extraordinary live volume contribute to empower listeners, providing metalheads with the means and inspiration to confront the sound's brutal force. From an agonistic perspective, consumers

would, therefore, valorize loudness for its ability to set up a fair confrontation. By simultaneously threatening and strengthening the body, loudness allows and enables consumers to exert and evaluate their physical strength and resilience in epic conditions.

Manifestations of such valorizations did not appear directly in most our discussions with metalheads. They nonetheless surfaced subtly, in-between lines, when consumers recollected the events that led them to consider and sometimes adopt hearing protections. Specifically, most our respondents had to experience the symptoms of self-destruction before contemplating self-protection. The first tinnitus often acted as a traumatic event fostering the realization that something had to be done. Metalheads differed with respect to the inconvenience it took to adopt protection. While some acted on the first buzzing, others had to experience prolonged pain, severe tinnitus, or even irremediable hearing loss to even consider such a solution. Regardless of the trigger severity, and even for the most dedicated protection users, it always took a corporeal dysfunction for metalheads to deviate from unprotected listening. The body had to show its limits, to be beaten and sometimes irrevocably broken. The fight had to be lost to consider different relations to loudness. The agon, from this perspective, is an exploration. It is through loudness destructive power that each consumer can seek and find the limits of her or his own body. This valorization might be unconscious, hastily repressed as consumers move towards more mature valorizations, but nonetheless imposes itself as an inevitable stage in the adoption of self-protection.

This idea is not radically new. Casual discussions revealed that it actually reflects the way many academics and laymen construe this phenomenon. We can only deplore, however, a general tendency to discard this process as puerile and unworthy of interest. Such rejection fails to consider the implications of this epistemic process. If only from a practical standpoint, this experience of the limit is a much more efficient deterrent than any public health discourse. As previously emphasized, it is only after experiencing their corporeal frailty that some consumers start protecting themselves from destructive sounds. More generally, we argue that confronting loudness destructive power can be a key moment in metalheads' self construction. This

confrontation is an opportunity for young consumers to envision and negotiate a new relation to their body. Dimitri expressed this idea in the following extract, while reflecting on the events that brought him and his friends to use hearing protections:

> Max: Is it the trajectory your friends have taken as well or…well, you all started using them as the same time or…
>
> Dimitri: Yes. More or less, yeah. But I think this is also related to the fact that we've grown older, you know. We might have realized that our body was not eternal. And it is true that I began to stop doing stupid things which might have put me in jeopardy when I started to really use boules Quiès, to hydrate my voice when I sang, or stuff like that. When I started to look after the machinery. Before that, it was really a real nonsense, you know.

Dimitri's narrative suggests a certain intertwinement of self-preservative practices. He notes how his decision to use hearing protections on a regular basis coincided with the adoption of other safe practices aimed at preserving his body. His comment does not suggest that tinnitus or hearing loss were at the origin of this process; but it clearly illustrates how such issues participated in a broader process which resulted in an increased awareness about his body's frailty and the need to spare it.

Agonistic valorizations of loudness destructive potential are unstable. Caillois (1958 [1967], p50]) emphasizes that the agon supposes the artificial creation of equal opportunities; but, on the long run, confronting extreme sound levels is engaging in a losing battle. There is no chance to win against sound. Most metal consumers end up realizing that their defeat is only a matter of time. Even unprotected consumers usually acknowledge that their hearing will drop and that they might ultimately not be able to enjoy the music anymore. As such, agonistic valorizations are bound to be transcended. How they are transcended is a matter we will investigate in our shortly (cf. II. Damage control, damage acceptance). However, before we move on, we will first consider the second term of the agon—alea axis.

B. Aleatory valorization

Per definition, valorizing loudness destructive potential as an alea involves a non-control. While agonistic valorizations imply the inability or refusal to acknowledge one's weakness facing sound, aleatory valorizations involve an inability to acknowledge one's power.[82] Unable or unwilling to recognize opportunities for control, the consumer would delegate her or his relation to loudness destructive potential to something or somebody else. The metalheads who let the community dictate their relation to sound, refusing hearing protections because they contradict the genre cultural codes or blindly following a friend's recommendation, manifest such a non-control. We suggest it is worth reflecting further upon this ideal construction, considering it underlies widespread discourses regarding self-destructive practices. Such discourses tend to explain self-destruction as a copycat or mimetic effect, where some consumers engage in self-destructive behaviors as a way to manage impressions and adhere to enforced social norms (Herman, Roth, and Polivy 2003).

The idea is appealing. Despite its high valorization of individual freedom (Berger 1999, pp267-269), the metal culture is heavily normative. There are multiple codes and good practices that facilitate and to some degree condition newcomers' integration in the community.[83] Some of these codes are corporeal in nature. The most notorious example is the long hair that identifies metalheads inside and outside the concert house. Although metalheads are free to sport the haircut they like, long and well-tended hair are usually considered as good indicators that an individual commits to the subculture. As such, it would make sense for newcomers to adopt unprotected listening as part of the learning process that guides their entry into the metal culture. The metalheads we talked with mostly rebutted such a process. They presented self-protection and bare listening as personal choices respected within the community.

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[82] We can see that such assertion respects the contrariety relation which is supposed to tie the two sub-contrary terms.

[83] We will introduce and discuss these codes progressively. Attempting to discuss them all right now would engage us in a broader ethnography of the concert which would durably divert us from our object of study.

Aleatory valorizations nonetheless surfaced in our observations and more rarely in our discussions with some metal enthusiasts.

Surprisingly enough, however, the cases of mimesis we witnessed first-hand or discussed with metalheads did not necessarily build towards bare listening. On April 21st 2012, we participated, along with an external observer, in a battle of the band at the Le Divan du Monde in Paris. As we waited for the concert to start, we observed a group of 5 or 6 teenagers talking together. The group was amazed that one of its members, a younger metalhead who had apparently not integrated the entire metal code, [84] did not possess hearing protections. Anxious to remedy a "life or death" situation, one group member told him that they were heading for the nearest pharmacy. The younger metalhead went along without protesting. This episode illustrates quite clearly aleatory valorizations of loudness destructive potential. The younger metalhead went along with the group's decision. Had the group not pushed in this direction (or had pushed in the other); he would have most likely enjoyed the concert without protections. Our external observer experienced the scene in a similar way and confirmed our feeling as we discussed episode after the concert.

Dimitri, a black metal musician, gave us another opportunity to observe such valorization. As a cultural event manager, he had the occasion to organize a metal concert in the city he works for. During an interview, he explained how he had tried to promote hearing protections during this event. He emphasized the importance of presenting self-protection as a "normal" practice in order to circumvent some metalheads' pride and race to extremism; as compared to a strategy that would have stressed sound's detrimental effects. He believed this strategy had paid considering many concert-goers had used the protections handed out. Such success would tend to further support the existence of aleatory valorizations of loudness destructiveness as consumers modeled their behaviors on what was presented as normal practice, rather than health considerations. We do not contend that aleatory valorizations necessarily result

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[84] While his apparel and hair cut manifested an effort to abide by the genre codes, it ultimately lacked taste, mixing elements from disparate and sometimes contradictory sub-genres without excelling in any of them.

in self-protection. Newcomers' tendency not to self-protect, an observation which was supported by our informants' evolving relation to loudness and self-destruction, might reflect a compliance with the genre untold rules, a non-control. We focused on these cases, however, because they tend to contradict a one-way approach to mimesis. Mindless imitation can also lead to healthier choices and practices, an idea which is coherent with the disciplinary processes we defined in our theoretical section (cf. B. The moral body). In this context, communications and actions that dissociate protection from self-destructive connotations might bear better results than currently enforced policies.

Public policy-makers should, nonetheless, be cautious not to jump on this train too rapidly. Much like the agon, albeit for different reasons, aleatory valorizations are bound to be transcended. In a metal culture that values control and self-determination so highly, consumers are rarely satisfied with externally set norms. Although metalheads usually abide by some sub-genre codes, they do so in a self-reflexive and active manner. The choice to conform to behavioral or stylistic norms is construed as an act of personal sovereignty, an idea we will support and discuss repeatedly in this dissertation. The young consumer we considered in our last paragraph probably went on experiencing with the product, with its symbolic and somatic value; maybe rejected it. Whichever way, it is likely he developed a more active valorization of hearing protections and loudness destructive potential. Next, we consider how consumers transcend aleatory and agonistic valorizations to reach more mature positions acknowledging both extreme sounds' destructive power and their ability to control it.

II. Damage control, damage acceptance

For a dedicated metalhead who attends concerts on a regular basis, it is usually a matter of time before the body shows its limits. Tinnitus settle in, more insistent and lasting concert after concert. A particularly aggressive cymbal, pyrotechnic effect, or electronic sound might trigger the first pains, making the sonic threat more pressing in the concert house itself. In the meanwhile, metalheads will usually get more comfortable within the culture, feeling more legitimate as they accumulate concerts, collect shirts, and build their sub-

cultural knowledge (Kahn-Harris 2007, pp121-127). This dual movement leads most consumers to reconsider the way they valorize loudness destructive potential, adopting positions which are often more active and self-reflexive. In this sub-section, we will focus on let-go and control-based valorizations of loudness destructive potential. We will attempt to define these positions and deconstruct their articulations and dynamics. Far from staying fixed on a valorization, consumers often oscillate between these two logical ideals and integrate elements of alea and agon in their relation to sound. Exploring these articulations, we hope to show that positions towards self-destruction and protection are the result of complex valorization processes, often far from over-simplistic popular conceptions.

A. From agon to damage control

In our previous section, we argued that he agon is a confrontation of loudness destructive potential. It is an unresolved position that assumes a temporary balance of power and an attempt to overcome the sound destructiveness. Following semiotic theory, the control position is obtained through the assertion of the agon that presupposes it. While loudness' agonistic value lies in the ephemeral *status quo* it creates, we propose to seek control in its denouement. Working from the subject perspective, fleshing out the control position would therefore amount to consider how consumers valorize and manage loudness' destructiveness as a controlled object. This approach also satisfies the contradiction relation that should logically relate control and alea, considering we defined the latter as a non-control, a situation in which the consumer forsakes control over destructivity to another actor. The most obvious manifestation of damage control is self-protection. Adopting hearing protections is a sure way to prevent hearing loss and other impairments; and many respondents, including non-users, mentioned damage control as the objective underlying hearing protection use. We should nonetheless stress that using hearing protections is only one possible manifestation of control. Different consumers mentioned distance-based strategies to limit the damages caused by sound. Instead of using hearing protection, or sometimes as a complementary technique, these consumers chose to move away from the stage and its powerful loudspeakers. Retreating towards the bleachers or outer doors

helped to cope with the sound violence when it became unbearable. While such strategies might make little difference from the health perspective, they nonetheless manifest a desire to control loudness' detrimental effects, or its most painful expressions at least. Some consumers also resort to do-it-yourself solutions to temper sound. Such solutions include making protections out of toilet paper, using in-ear headphones, or simply finger-plugging one's ears.

To better understand consumers' articulation of self-destruction and control, it is worthwhile to consider more precisely the nature of this value. Floch distinguishes two types of values (Floch 1990). Base values "correspond to the plane of fundamental preoccupations of being and whose quest subtends life and provides meaning to the realization of multiple, secondary programmes of action that are more superficial or more "practical"" (Floch 2001, p115). Floch differentiates these values, core to one's life and identity, from instrumental values; but he fails to give a clear definition of the latter. Working on automobile advertisement, he defines functionality, reliability, and maneuverability as instrumental values. However, it is ultimately unclear whether his base/instrumental distinction is specific to the context he considers (i.e. car commercials) or is a more fundamental theoretical opposition that finds its place in a larger semiotic theory. Following a semiotic logic of relations and contrasts, we propose to understand and define instrumental values with respect to base values. While base values are simultaneously the fundamental origin and end of consumers' discourses, we define instrumental values as a means, a competence that will facilitate or not-oppose (i.e. allow) the realization of base values. This distinction makes sense in the metal context and can help to understand consumers' relations to loudness and self-protection.

In line with most communication and prevention programs (e.g. http://www.ecoute-ton-oreille.com/),[85] several protection users presented damage control as a way to enjoy music over the long run. In their discourses, control was instrumental to the preservation of a more fundamental or base

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[85] "Ecoute ton oreille" is a state-funded program promoting safe behavior with respect to recreational sound and more specifically music. Its tagline, "Protéger son ouïe, c'est protéger la musique qu'on aime" would translate to "Protecting you hearing is protecting the music you love."

aesthetic value. These consumers often placed music, its making and appreciation, at the heart of their lives and identities. Some consumers also mentioned tinnitus' and hearing loss' anti-social consequences, framing the control of loudness destructive potential as a way to avoid the professional and personal difficulties caused by hearing impairment. Control, or more specifically damage control, was then instrumental to the preservation of a more fundamental sociality. At first glance, this instrumental valorization of control might comfort public policy makers in their current effort and rhetoric to promote hearing protections. The discourses of protected consumers indeed reproduced, to a large extent, the rhetoric leveraged by charities advocating self-protection; and some consumers directly credited health-oriented communications with changing attitudes within the community. Upon further inspection however, this apparent success should not obfuscate this rhetoric shortcomings and potential perverse effects. The current exclusive focus on control as an instrumental value dramatically underestimates its importance for some consumers. This omission ultimately curbs these communications' efficiency and sometimes causes counter-productive effects.

For some consumers, control appeared simultaneously as a base and instrumental value, a means and an end. Sylvia is a 30 years old metalhead who entered the genre during her teenage years. She occasionally uses protections for the very reasons we mentioned in our previous paragraph. She wants to be able to enjoy the music on the long-run. She also notes that damage control is necessary to feel comfortable when some bands push their sounds at painful levels. However, beyond this instrumental dimension, Sylvia manifested a more fundamental valorization that she was able to experience through unprotected listening. She compared bare listening to "floating on her back" in the water,[86] insisting on the control she had over her personal comfort when she did not use hearing protections:

> Syvia: Clearly. Because if it is uncomfortable, you can move. You can get around. Well, as long as long as the room is not full. It is I who chooses the most comfortable sport for my ears. So, I'll say yes, it is I

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[86] In French, "faire la planche."

who decide. It is I who take things into my own hands. It is I who go for my comfort.

In this extract, Sylvia emphasizes that unprotected listening allows her experiencing an internal locus of power. The resources to deal with sound are found within. It is through her body, specifically her displacements in the room that she is able to confront and manage sound. Unprotected listening is, for her, an expression of power on and through the body; it simultaneously involves the body as subject (of perception and movement) and object (to be made comfortable). Using protection devices, on the other hand, externalizes and to some degree foregoes control. It is relying on an alien object. Although Sylvia does not make the next connection explicit, we can legitimately argue that self-protection highlights the frailty and weakness of the body.

This case illustrates quite clearly how instrumental and base valorizations of control can conflict. For Sylvia, listening to and acting on public health discourses is a way to exert instrumental control; but it is also foregoing control as at more fundamental level. Facing a detrimental sound level, she has to juggle, weigh, and balance these two contradicting levels. Public health organizations should, therefore, craft their message carefully. Any recommendation to exert instrumental control is also a potential threat to a more fundamental value. Furthermore, this difficult trade-off can help to explain Sylvia's, as well as many other consumers', liking for hearing protections that allow some control over the protection process. Some hearing protections are designed to allow variation in the insertion depth and angle. Others allow consumers to play with filters that will decrease or increase the number of decibels attenuated (e.g. www.alpinehearingprotection.com). This preference not only manifests a motivation to be protected, but also to actively manage the protection process. Where traditional protections completely externalize control, these flexible solutions allow "collaborating" with the protection to achieve an objective, be it self-preservation, comfort, or aesthetic appreciation as will be argued in our next chapters. They offer control over control and therefore reconcile the two levels of valorizations.

B. Damage acceptance.

While some consumers actively control loudness destructive potential, others appear to have accepted it as part of the experience. The unprotected respondents we interviewed were often aware about the damages caused by extreme sound levels. Most had experienced them in the flesh. Nico, a metal enthusiast and musician, started using protections after experiencing sustained and powerful concert-induced tinnitus. Acknowledging the music importance in his life, he was not willing to lose sound irrevocably. Despite this traumatic event and realization, Nico still attends some concerts unprotected. Some bands or specific performances deserve letting-go loudness' destructive potential. For many unprotected listeners, self-destruction is a trade-off. Consumers accept hearing loss as the unavoidable counterpart for enjoying a rich musical, spiritual, and social experience.[87] From this perspective let-go is an instrumental value, a non-opposition to the realization of an ideal concert experience.[88] Valorizing loudness destructive potential as a let-go implies an active renouncement of health. Unprotected consumers' refusal to self-protect does not manifest public health communications' failure to connect. Unprotected consumers have often integrated and negotiated these public discourses to adopt positions that are at least partially conscious. Consumers like Nico are aware about sound's detrimental effects; and they know that they might and should protect themselves (and sometimes do for that matter). Most present their hearing and body as limited and precious resources that allow enjoying the concert experience. Mitigating a popular account about self-destructive consumption, these consumers are far from negating their body's value. They might have difficulties to assess the full train of consequences corporeal degradation might have; but they nonetheless hold their body as a valuable subject/object. This construal begs for another clarification. Damage acceptance involves a form of corporeal instrumentalization as consumers use

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[87] Let us emphasize that such valorization makes sense in our square design. Aleatory and let-go valorizations do share a complementary relation. Letting-go implies embracing the non-control that alea represents. It is an engagement, an active submission to loudness' destructive potential. For the consumer to give in to loudness (i.e. to let-go), it is first necessary for loudness to escape the consumer's control (i.e. non-control or alea).

[88] We do not deny a more fundamental valorization. Our upcoming sections, especially our discussion of spirituality in the concert house, will emphasize this point.

and self-reflexively consume their body to enjoy a musical experience ; but this instrumentalization is very different from the one fantasized by consumer health psychology. It is not mechanization. The body, here, is not an *alter ego* either. It is not another, external to the individual. The body is simultaneously the resource, the instrument, the operator, and the product of the consumption process.

C. Tensions between valorizations.

Our discussions so far have presented let-go and control as pure or ideal positions; but it is already apparent from Sylvia's or Nico's case that consumers' valorization of loudness are teemed with tensions and contradictions. Discussing Sylvia's discourse, we pointed out how two levels of a similar value (base and instrumental control) can contradict each other; and just like Nico, many consumers manage to walk a wavering line between control and let-go, deciding whether to self-protect one concert at a time. Some metalheads even pass from one position to the other between the opening act and headliner. It is not unusual for metal consumers to put their protections away when their favorite band comes on-stage. A notable tension we have not addressed so far is the one that relates let-go to the agon—alea axis. Our previous paragraphs might convey the impression that unprotected consumers definitely give up aleatory and agonistic valorizations to engage loudness destructive potential as a let-go. They would grow up into let-go. Upon further inspection however, consumers' relations to loudness and self-destruction are less stable. Their departure from the sub-contrary axis is rarely complete and definitive.

In this respect, it is interesting to consider the cognitive dissonance unprotected consumers often experience (Festinger 1962). Their willingness to enjoy and work with music over the long-run end up clashing with the short-term decision to attend concerts unprotected. Baptiste, a metal, electro, and reggae enthusiast, as well as a sound engineer by trade, expressed this dissonance quite directly. He appeared genuinely concerned when he mentioned that he had probably lost some hearing in his right ear due to unprotected live music listening:

Baptiste: Well, this is something that really scares me. I have not confirmed it through real examination; but it is something that does scare me; losing my ears. I couldn't work without them and there is passion. The music…It would piss me off. But then, you always have this thing and this aspect…yes, it is less sexy to use earplugs because it deteriorates the sound and…It is somewhat like condoms, you see? It's something like that."

To some extent, Baptiste seems to have accepted self-destruction. He notes that he certainly suffers from it already. He appears conscious about the consequences of his choices; and he does not escape his responsibility in the process, a point which was further supported on other informal occasions. His position therefore reflects some acceptance or resignation, some awareness about his body's frailty that breaks with a purely agonistic valorization of sound. Furthermore, he noted earlier in the discussion that he had tried hearing protection and knew they could efficiently tackle these extreme sounds, acknowledging his power to address the situation.

Upon further inspection however, and by re-contextualizing this extract in the broader interview, we can grasp the tensions that underlie Baptiste's position. His cognitive discomfort appears to manifest an episodic re-commitment to aleatory and agonistic valorizations. Per moment, his discourse points to a form of denial where he refuses or fails to consider not only his ability and responsibility in dealing with detrimental sound levels (alea), but also this consumption entire train of consequences (agon). The fact that he "has not confirmed it [his loss] through real examination" tends to support this interpretation. Another indication that Baptiste might not have entirely abandoned such valorizations came right after discussing the legal limitation on live sound levels. Although he agreed that hearing protections are an efficient solutions to cope with deafening sounds (a method he had tried but given up), he considered that significant progress towards sonic health might be achieved if concert houses respected the existing legal limitations. We do not disagree with his comment although most the concerts we attended actually respected this threshold. Accurate or not, his comment displaces the blame on a third party and, in doing so, frames loudness destructive potential as an

alea.[89] Both valorizations (let-go and agonistic—aleatory) therefore appear to make equal sense in Baptiste's discourse; a discourse and value system which is not isolated among unprotected consumers. Such positions are difficult to address for public policy-makers as they lay on contradictory values. While consumers are able to maintain this contradiction in a delicate and very personal equilibrium, practitioners would understandably have difficulties to design communications that address it directly and with a global appeal. We nonetheless believe that working in such a direction is necessary considering such contradictions characterize a significant part of the metal population.

III. Conclusion

In this section, we defined four valorizations of loudness' destructiveness. Furthermore, our developments suggest that consumers (1) combine these valorizations in highly personal, dynamic, complex, and sometimes contradictory systems. In the process, we emphasized the role of the body and somatic experience in negotiating new relations to loudness' destructive potential. Although we cannot draw definitive conclusions given our focus on adult consumers, our reflections suggest that experiencing the limits of the body, while acquiring a more robust socio-cultural legitimacy can contribute to develop more active and reflexive positions towards loudness' destructiveness. We now consider our findings' implications for public policies and current research, notably from the consumer health psychology perspective.

Our findings invite to challenge the logic of compartmentalization that underlies consumer health psychology. Our theoretical section discussed how the research stream proposes to tackle self-destruction by alienating and isolating the consumer from her or his body (cf. B. The detachment logic). Our findings underscore that it is *through* the body that consumers experience, acknowledge, and negotiate the pains and dysfunctions induced by self-destruction. Even the most dedicated protection users had to experience

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[89] To replace Baptiste's comment in its proper context, it is important to mention that decreasing the sound intensity by using an electronic compressor (the device used in concert to ensure that 105 dB legal limit is respected) would create a subjective sonic experience very different from using hearing protections providing a similar attenuation. We will address these issues more fully in our next chapter: Chapter V: Loudness aesthetics.

loudness' destructiveness in the flesh (e.g. tinnitus, hearing loss) before they even considered self-protecting. For most our respondents, physical pain and feelings of corporeal deterioration triggered and guided a process of self-reflection and transformation which resulted in the modification of their relation to extreme sound levels and self-destruction; and it was frequently through the body that metalheads implemented these modifications, resorting to alternative and *sometimes* safer ways of the body to experience and listen to the music (changing one's position within the room, searching for a body/earplug symbiosis…).[90] This process invites to challenge the logic of compartmentalization on two bases: ontological and practical. Ontologically, it challenges the exile that strikes the body in consumer health psychology. It emphasizes the artificial nature of the body/self dissociation, reminding the intertwinedness of the subjective and objective bodies in the lived experience. Practically, by systematically antagonizing the body, the research stream deprives itself from a powerful leverage in consumer welfare. In our context, the corporeal experience appears as a much more powerful deterrent than any public communication or action. Even if it abides by a dualist conception of the self and body, consumer health psychology might consider working *with* the body rather than *against* it.

While the compartmentalization logic contradicts quite clearly the experience of loudness' destructive potential in our context, the logic of control that underlies consumer health psychology resonates with metalheads' discourses. Our discussions pointed out that some consumers value control for its own sake, that they celebrate their own cult of control. We might therefore conclude to a partial alignment of consumers' and psychologists' value systems. However, this common valorization of control should not hide potential for tensions and significant differences in the ways these values are articulated. In relation to the body notably, control's signification drastically differs. The control advocated by consumer health psychologists is agonistic in

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[90] We voluntarily use the term "ways of the body" as opposed to "techniques of the body" (Mauss 1936). The term "technique of the body" tends to reinforce the symbolic construction of the body as an objectified instrument, which an exterior agent would use to achieve a specific purpose. By using the term "way", we want to stress the confusion of the agent, the instrument, and the objective.

nature. It is a confrontation *of* the bestial and vicious body *for* the maintenance and improvement of biological and social bodies (cf. A. The performance logic). Consumers' discourses establish a profound rupture with this construction. While consumer psychology amalgamates self-control and self-preservation, some consumers entirely dissociate these two outcomes. As illustrated by Sylvia, the valorization and exercise of control at a fundamental level can even result in the choice of self-destruction or the adoption of sub-optimal solutions from a health perspective. As argued in this chapter, the body in consumers' discourses is not only the object of control, an antagonist or stake; it is also the way control is subjectively exerted and experienced. In this context, any act of control over one's body is conjointly an act of submission, a let-go, a willing, and self-inflicted disempowerment. Conversely, letting-go, yielding to the destructive violence of the sound can be construed as an act of power.

The envelopment of the subjective and objective bodies in the lived experience, as illustrated by the process of loudness consumption, implies that self-control is "always already" a self-submission. Consumer health psychology eludes this essential contradiction by negating the subjective body; but deconstructing this fiction urges to consider that learning to behave healthily is as much about self-control as it is about forsaking control and letting go. Following health-oriented prescriptions implies a partial loss of self. It is relinquishing control at a corporeal level. This conjunction has significant implications for public health policies. By systematically inflating the valorization of control, by limiting its focus to a single term of a dyadic relation, consumer health psychology is likely to undermine its own efficiency. As illustrated by our discussion of self-protection, the celebration of individual power can result in reluctance to rely on external sources of protection. Although our fieldwork focused on hearing protections, it is reasonable to assume that similar perverse effects might mitigate the efficiency of public communications and social actions in other domains. As a political institution advocating self-control, consumer health psychology might therefore have an impact adverse to the one supported in its individual articles. In this

perspective, re-valorizing the individual experience of let-go would ultimately condition the adoption of safer and healthier practices.[91]

Finally, our findings challenge the catastrophic rhetoric that underlies consumer health psychology. The cases we studied revealed that the choice between health and self-destruction is usually not an all-or-nothing dilemma. All our respondents, even the most convinced bare listeners, exhibited some moderation when the sound got painful or uncomfortable. Many metalheads actually juggle self-protection and self-destruction, adapting their behavior towards loudness' destructiveness over the short- and long-run. Loudness can have an imperious and overwhelming appeal. Sometimes during our fieldwork, we experienced the urge described by our respondents to take our protections off and jump in the pit upon hearing the first riff of a well-liked song. However, replacing this ephemeral urge into a broader time frame provides a richer representation of consumers' behaviors. For most consumers, such loss of self marks a paroxysm or climax in a more global experience of the concert (and concerts in general); a point we will further investigate in our section on loudness spiritual valorization (cf.

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[91] A superficial reading of our argument might lead to the conclusion that consumer psychologists should now work to instill submission in consumers; but beyond the obvious political danger it would imply, such a reading would miss our point. Our argument is not that the promotion of let-go should replace the promotion of control. It is rather that (1) the experience of control and let-go are intimately and inextricably intertwined in self-destructive and self-protective decisions and practices and that (2) research acknowledging this intertwinement would open new leads of investigation and could facilitate the design of solution more in-tune with consumers everyday experiences.

Chapter VI: Transgressing boundaries: Loudness as a sacred experience). Over time, the corporeal drive that sometimes leads to self-destruction can coexist with self-protective behaviors aiming at preservation. Resorting to symbolic and somatic resources available in and outside the community, most consumers dynamically negotiate this tension, taking into account the deleterious and painful consequences of their choices (cf. II. Damage control, damage acceptance). This process of self-exploration results in positions that can and usually do make way for compromises; and these compromises constitute a form of controlled impulsivity that contrasts with the binging, raging, and helpless consumer assumed in consumer psychology.[92]

We do not contend that consumer health psychology has no role to play, that consumers would be better off left alone. Compromises are difficult to reach and painful for some consumers; and our discussions indicate that metalheads turn to health authorities to negotiate this delicate process, borrowing symbolic resources and practices from public health communications to interpret and manage their corporeal experience. Consumers therefore appear to need points of view, personal and institutional, within and outside their community to form and adapt their relation to loudness, self-destruction, and health. Consumer health psychology, relayed by public media and public policies, is such a point of view, a prominent and expert one for that matter. However, by hammering a normative message so remote from consumers' lived experience, we fear that consumer health psychology might ultimately curb its legitimacy and potential impact. Reintroducing the compromise, the dynamic, the sub-optimal; re-valorizing self-destruction as a rich, multi-sided process might pose significant ethical as well as epistemological and methodological challenges to the research stream. However, our developments suggest that such a reconfiguration would ultimately allow policy-makers and consumer health theorists to (1) better understand resistances to current policies, (2) identify new leverage for action

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[92] Ehrenberg (1995, p129-133) reaches a similar conclusion reviewing studies on heroin addicts, emphasizing the relative control many addicts have over their consumption. This extreme case lets think that our reflections might be extended to other fields where self-destruction is progressive, such as unhealthy eating.

and opportunities for research, and (3) work in a more efficacious and harmonious manner with consumers.

Chapter V: Loudness aesthetics

Suggested listening:

- Bathory – A Fine Day to Die (1988)
- Gojira – Oroborus [Live] (2008)
- Lamb of God – Laid to Rest [Live] (2004)

Motivations to attend a concert are manifold. Some consumers appreciate it as a social occasion. It gives them the opportunity to gather and interact with fellow metalheads and friends around a shared experience. We also met musicians, such as Dimitri or Nico, who attended some concerts to support local acts and try to keep their respective scenes alive and dynamic. Still others, such as Sandrine and John, frequently participate in concerts as organizers or merchandisers, selling underground records and distributing fanzines. Underneath this manifest diversity, however, lies a core attraction to the music. When Sandrine and John set up their "merch booth" in a suburban community center, they do so because they respect and appreciate the music played there. They made this point clear during our interview. When Dimitri or Nico attend a concert for political reasons, they nonetheless pay close attention to the bands' performance. Participating in concerts with them, we had the opportunity to observe them paying undivided attention to the bands they had come to support, even if our subsequent conversations revealed they had disliked the performance.

Appreciating the live music materiality is often the most important reason to buy a concert ticket, especially for consumers who already appreciate the band on record. The sound intensity that characterizes live performances greatly contributes to give the music its particular tone and substance. Most consumers acknowledge this contribution. Yet, this apparent consensus actually conceals diverse, and sometimes contradictory, positions towards loudness' musicality. In this section, we propose to investigate the different ways consumers valorize loudness from a critical or aesthetic perspective. Said differently, how does loudness influence the perceived quality of a musical performance from an emic perspective? This question, we will argue, is

fundamental to understand consumers' diverse relations to sound, hearing protections, and self-destruction.

Addressing this issue poses a major challenge and requires refining our approach to loudness and sound intensity. While our previous section approached loudness as a quantity or intensity, correlating sound levels physical measure and consumers' understanding of loudness, the next one will require considering its qualitative dimension. Live music has a particular materiality. Its texture is rich, thick, and rugged; and extreme sound levels play a major role in molding this texture to produce metal's characteristic sound (Walser 1993, p41). Most consumers acknowledge that the sound intensity plays such a role. They disagree, however, regarding the extent and exact nature of its impact on the live sonic texture. This disagreement notably stems from the absence of consensus regarding what the term "loudness" actually denotes. The many differences that separate live performances from home listening further fuel this debate. The sound intensity is not the only factor that distinguishes the two consumptions contexts. Staying at a technical level, the concert house architectural and acoustic properties, its PA system, and sound engineering contribute to give specific live performances their dimension and texture. As such, it is difficult to pin down precisely the role of sound levels in a musical rendition quality. While musicology can define sound intensity's effects from a theoretical standpoint or in laboratory conditions, it is much harder for consumers in a naturalistic setting to isolate its perceptual effects. As a result, the sonic qualities consumers attribute to loudness differ. They are not clearly and universally delimited. From an acoustic perspective, some of these attributions are probably erroneous. Consumers talk about "loudness" when they actually describe percepts that relate to volume or timbre; but taking these qualitative differences into account, even if they constitute misattributions or imprecision, is necessary to better understand and address loudness consumption.

Where to begin, however, when loudness takes so diverse denotative significations? In this section, we will focus on a specific sonic phenomenon which will allow us articulating metalheads' various discourses about loudness' musicality in a relatively simple but precise manner. As its sonic

intensity increases, live music acquires a noisy quality. Most respondents acknowledged and mentioned this effect although they explained it in different terms. In this section, the term "loudness" will denote this noise. We should bring two important precisions right away. First, our use of the term noise is not invested with positively or negatively. We only use it, for lack of a more neutral word, to denote a sonic density and texture that differentiates live from recorded music. We leave it to consumers to valorize this noise. Second, this is our choice, as researchers and writers, to define this noise as "loudness." Some consumers would partially disagree with such a definition. Various respondents mentioned that loudness is only one of the factors concurring to produce this noise. For these consumers, equating loudness and noise would therefore be abusive, even if the two notions and experiences are related. Our interpretations should account for these differences between consumers' definitions of loudness, and we will point out when this simplification starts masking more than it reveals.

In sum, this chapter will consider how metal consumers valorize loudness from an aesthetic perspective. We will first focus on two ideal modes of aesthetic engagement with loudness (cf. I. Loudness' musicality: Power, clarity, quintessentiality). We will argue that consumers' valorization of and relation to loudness greatly depend on the aesthetic value they ascribe it. While consumers who consider loudness as a musical element tend to let it go, those who judge it to be anti-musical are more prone to control it, notably through the use of hearing protection which allow to reach more clarity, more structure, and more cleanliness. These reflections will lead us to consider that, from an aesthetic perspective, let-go and control simultaneously constitute instrumental and base aesthetic values for metalheads. We will conclude this first section by mitigating this ideal dichotomy to represent more finely consumers' experience. Our second section, which will focus on the agon—alea sub-contrary axis, will give us the opportunity to consider the aesthetic valorization of loudness as a dynamic learning process (cf. II. Aesthetic alea and agon: Nurturing a taste for metal). We will argue that positions within the square are not fixed, offering leeway for public policies and social action. However, this discussion will also highlight that aesthetic oppositions to hearing protections

are sometimes firmly grounded in consumers' personal history, complicating policy-makers' task.

I. Loudness' musicality: Power, clarity, quintessentiality

This section will require working on multiple objects and layers of meaning. In order to facilitate our readers' progression through the text, we graphically represent and organize these objects and layers in table 6. Based on informal and projective interviews with metal enthusiasts, we identified two ideal modes of aesthetic engagement with loudness, resting, to a large extent, upon contrary valorizations of loudness, metal music, and hearing protections. Some metalheads consider loudness to be anti-musical (mode of aesthetic engagement A). They usually describe it as an interference hindering the appreciation process. Although our respondents used different terms to describe these interferences, the overarching lexical field and symbolic

Table 6 – Organization of aesthetic values

Ideal modes of aesthetic engagement	Mode of aesthetic engagement A (Control)	Mode of aesthetic engagement B (Let-go)
Sample statements about hearing protections	« It is taking a raw product and transforming into something…into something literally listenable…»	« It is just an object that will interfere in this relation, you know. So it is…yes, it is once again this idea of spoiling, of a waste…»
Hearing protections value	Filter	Interference
Loudness musical value	Anti-musical	Musical
Aesthetic treatment required	Control	Let-go
Music base value II (medial) (*Let-go—Control as base values*)	Clarity (Control)	Power, energy, intensity, aggressiveness (Let-go)
Music base value I	Quintessentiality	

⟶ Relation of presupposition (e.g. quintessentiality presupposes (1) energy in mode of aesthetic engagement A; and (2) clarity in mode of aesthetic engagement B)

imaginary leveraged was surprisingly stable: as sound is pushed to extreme levels, the music gets mushy, dirty, and can quickly transform into an incomprehensible mess. In extreme cases, it turned concerts into disappointing, or even grueling aesthetic experiences.

Correlatively, these consumers were also the more prone to use hearing protections, which they primarily defined as sound control devices, even before mentioning their protective value. It was the case of Alex, a dedicated protection user, who clearly and richly manifested mode of aesthetic engagement A while discussing his position towards hearing protections:

> Alex: Earlier, I was saying it is like listening to a CD live when I have my plugs. Exactly, it sometimes works as a filter for me, doing something my ear cannot do by itself because of the sound overflow. And it is precisely that. It is taking a raw product and transforming into something…into something literally listenable…and that gives something-obviously depending on the style-but that gives something coherent. Once again literally. Which enables me to understand what happens. I will be able to hear, me too, what everyone does, distinguish, and all that put together…well, it gives what I wanted to see and I think I am all the more satisfied for it. This is the way I experience it at every concert.

Alex valorizes hearing protections for their ability to filter the live sound overflow. They allow him to separate the "savory for the unsavory," to "extract the best parts" of the performance, two expressions he had used earlier in his interview. He uses them to control loudness and refine the raw music blasted through concert houses' powerful PA systems. To some extent, he co-creates the music by actively managing the sonic matter the band offers. As for most consumers making such use of hearing protections, his medial objective is clarity and intelligibility. He filters extreme sound levels in order to access a pure sound, free from unwanted crackles and interferences. Hearing protections also help him to better distinguish individual instruments. Some musical elements can become difficult to hear when sound levels increase. The virtuous guitar soli,which take a crucial importance in many metal sub-genres (Walser

159

1993, pp50-51), get lost in the tight sonic mass. Many earplug users argue that hearing protections help to single out instruments, hear a more detailed performance, and better appreciate the music technicality.[93] This interest in a well-defined, precise, and clearly structured sound entices to consider control both as an instrumental and base aesthetic value for consumers engaging the music in A mode. It is instrumental as consumers apply an aesthetic control in order to reach the music underlying quality. However, the term also appears to subsume the valorization of clarity, cleanliness, technicality, and structure that motivates this effort in the first place. For these consumers, control therefore appears as the means and end of the appreciation process.[94]

At the other end of the semantic axis stand consumers who valorize loudness as a musical element. For these metalheads, loudness' noisy musicality is inherent to the metal genre. It is not a disturbance, but an integral part of the music. It constitutes the live sonic texture and density that motivates concert consumption in the first place. Tempering with this sonic dimension is ruled out; and hearing protections are a sure way to spoil a good performance:

> Jean-Baptiste: Well for me, the boule quiès[95] in itself, it is only an intermediary object. The concert, what will be interesting, it is the band, and the sound, and the feeling. Then, the boules quiès, it is only something which inserts itself between the two. But this is the object in itself, which does not pose me any problem. It is just an object that will interfere in this relation, you know. So it is…yes, it is once again this idea of spoiling, of a waste…

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[93] This idea makes sense from an etic perspective as most hearing protections do not decrease sound frequencies evenly. Therefore, they do not only decrease the sound intensity, but also reconfigure the balance of frequencies in the sound spectrum which constitute sounds and give them their texture.

[94] We understand this argument might seem tautological. However, we ask our readers to consider it further. Focusing on a different type of behavior, it is easy to note that some consumers value control as an instrument to better let-go. Metal consumers might for example drink heavily or smoke weed (i.e. exert an active control over their perceptive system), in order to facilitate their transcendental immersion in the experience (i.e. let-go).

[95] Boule Quiès is a brand of hearing protections. In France, the brand has been partly commoditized and it is not rare to talk about Boules Quiès as a generic term for hearing protections.

Jean-Baptiste repeatedly underlined hearing protections' spoiling influence during our interview. Although he considered using protections to avoid pain, it would be at the cost of the valued aesthetic experience. He argued that hearing protections tend to "asphyxiate" the sound and hide the musical details that attracted him to the genre in the first place. Probed on what he might lose by using hearing protections, Jean-Baptiste referred to notions such as "power" and "speed." He considered that hearing protections "dilutes" the sound and prevents from enjoying its "intensity." This reverence for live metal intensity was not specific to Jean-Baptiste and pervaded non-users' discourses about loudness. Ultimately, these consumers appeared to evaluate live music based on its ability to manifest the raw power central to the genre identity. Although they insisted on different notions (intensity, energy, power…), they mostly described the live concert as an occasion to unleash the music, to give it free rains, to let it reach its awe-inspiring potential; in other words, to let it go.

It is worthwhile to complete this analysis by taking a comparative look at the two modes of aesthetic engagement described so far. Interestingly, despite contrary positions towards loudness' aesthetic value and the treatment it requires, both modes ultimately reach for what we propose to call the music quintessence. Borrowing Cornfeld and Edwards' definition, Belk et his colleagues define quintessence as objects' "rare and mysterious capacity to be just exactly what they ought to be…unequivocally right" (Cornfeld and Edwards *in* Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989). In a notable semiotic slide, both protection users and non-users presented their preferred listening practices as an attempt to avoid or correct unwanted interferences and appreciate live music's right and pure form. Control and let-go were ultimately what we propose to define as medial values. While they were clearly appreciated in and of themselves (i.e. base), they also conditioned the access to the music quintessence (i.e. instrumental). This common, core valorization of aesthetic authenticity can contribute to explain how consumers who seem to diametrically differ with respect to the ideal aesthetic experience can nonetheless cohabitate, dialogue, and animate a shared aesthetic community.

Before we move on to the agon—alea sub-contrariety, we should bring two key clarifications which will qualify our developments. We should, first,

remind that the let-go—control axis represents, as in every chapter of this findings section, a gradual opposition. The modes of engagement we defined are two polar ideals that Alex and Jean-Baptiste come the closest to realizing. Most consumers, however, combine these opposite to some degree, often discursively and sometimes practically. Some metalheads, such as Sylvia for example, consider that hearing protections are a last resort when the music is just too loud. Ideally, Sylvia prefers to enjoy performances without them. If the sound settings are right, bare listening allows diving into the music and appreciating its awe-inspiring quality. However, when the sound is too high, notably because some bands confuse power and sound intensity, she appreciates protections as they can bring clarity and comfort in a performance that would otherwise be gruesome. Sylvia's position towards loudness and hearing protections illustrates a half-way position, inviting to be cautious about sweeping categorizations. It also emphasizes that consumers who prefer bare listening do not necessarily consider that louder is better. Aesthetically, they valorize loudness only to the extent that it manifests power.

The second precision we should bring is that hearing protections are not the only solution consumers use to control loudness and reach heightened aesthetic experiences. Staying at the aural level, several consumers mentioned that they fine-tuned the sounds they perceived by tinkering with their protection. They varied the depth and angle of insertion in order to refine their aesthetic experience. Even unprotected consumers sometimes engaged in such control. We, for example, observed some metalheads slightly fold their tragus[96] in order to filter the sound overflow and better hear some musical instruments (e.g. during soli). To be thorough, we should also consider a broader form of somatic control and engagement with loudness. We voluntarily focused on a restrictive definition of loudness as noise. We deemed this choice relevant given our practical concern. However, loudness is ultimately a more complex set of aural, tactile, interoceptive, and proprioceptive sensations. It is not only a sign, but also a somatic experience that consumers actively manage through corporeal practices reminding Mauss'

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[96] The tragus is "the prominence in front of the external opening of the outer ear" (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tragus).

techniques of the body (Mauss 1936). Metalheads' dances, placement, and interactions within the concert house have potential to inform and transform their perception of loudness and its musicality. As do the consumption of drugs or asceticism. We will address these issues in our next chapter, which will discuss both the multi-sensorial character of loudness and the individual and collective practices which shape its spiritual experience (cf.

Chapter VI: Transgressing boundaries: Loudness as a sacred experience). Considering the intimate ties which bind the aesthetic and the spiritual in the human experience (Eco 2004), this discussion will offer opportunities to cast further light, albeit indirectly, the aesthetic valorization of loudness. This opportunity, combined with the practical issue which guided our reflections (i.e. the adoption of hearing protections by metalheads), motivated our decision to tighten our analysis of loudness' musicality on the aural. A research exclusively dedicated to the aesthetics of loudness should however consider breaking the boundaries that separate senses and approach its experience from a holistic perspective.

II. Aesthetic alea and agon: Nurturing a taste for metal

A. Learning metal aesthetics

The positions we discussed in our previous section were usually mature positions. Our respondents presented them as relatively stable modes of aesthetic engagement with the music. In this section, we will consider the agon—alea sub-contrary axis and its relation to the let-go—control semantic category. This focus will give us the opportunity to discuss how consumers come to interpret, negotiate, and valorize loudness from an aesthetic perspective. It will cast light on the learning process consumers engage in before defining their position towards loudness. In semiotic terms, we will consider the positive and negative deixis of our square not only as logical, but also as chronological presuppositions of let-go and control. We will nonetheless leave room for an ongoing negotiation process, showing that even adult consumers' aesthetic valorizations of loudness are not entirely frozen.

An agonistic relation to loudness' musicality does not make immediate sense. Confronting the aesthetics one is supposed to enjoy is indeed counter-intuitive. However, a closer look at metalheads' entry into the genre reveals the idea's relevance. Despite their attraction to the music, many metalheads had to overcome some initial difficulties with the metal sound before being able to fully appreciate it. FX, a 29 year-old lawyer in-training who listens to a wide range of metal sub-genres, told us that the first metal band he listened to, Slayer, was initially a major disappointment. This band he had discovered on

his elder brother desk diary sounded "worse than hip-hop." It is only through repeated listening that he was able to enjoy the music peculiar sound and develop a genuine, profound, and enduring liking for the band. In the same vein, many respondents declared they had started listening to metal with relatively accessible subgenres (e.g. neo-metal, hard-rock) before moving towards more extreme ones, involving more complex and dense sound textures. The reasons why newcomers such as FX persist in the genre are diverse. Our previous and upcoming chapters suggest that motivations to engage the rugged texture of loudness are far from being restricted to the aesthetic. Regardless of these motivations, however, an enduring involvement in the music or some specific sub-genres often required overcoming an initial inability to grasp the music, or appreciate its full complexity.

Sonically, the concert constitutes a further step in the approach and negotiation of new sensations. It is the continuation of an exploration process that takes the consumer into new aesthetic territories. Loudness, as argued previously, constitutes a major and potentially disturbing aesthetic element to apprehend in the live context; and the choice to use or not to use hearing protections partially results from this initial agon. We should be careful using the term agon though. It might paint this negotiation process as a difficult, painful, and somewhat tiresome experience. Every metalhead we interviewed actually remembered their first concert fondly; and, overall, those consumers who progressively adopted hearing protections as an aesthetic device did not paint their initial unprotected experiences as gruesome or unlikable.[97] The aesthetic agon is not a trial by fire as much as an aural and somatic exploration during which consumers try to transcend loudness in diverse and sometimes very personal ways. Experimentations with hearing protections constitute such an attempt. Several metalheads mentioned that they had tried different types of protections before finding the ones able to sublimate the concert sound. Consumers have to learn and fine-tune the ways of the ear and body that we discussed in our previous section.

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[97] Except for some traumatic experiences which sometimes triggered their willigness to self-protect.

Consumers are not alone in this agonistic exploration. They can resort to symbolic resources and practices offered by the community to make sense of these new aesthetic experiences. We touch here to the alea that characterizes most metalheads' entry into the genre and its live performance. Metal is a heavily codified and normative genre. Focusing on the concert context alone, these codes bear on a wide range of issues including the form and content of social interactions, clothing and corporeal management, as well as placements and movements in the room (Weinstein 2000 [1991], pp205-212). This code is also aesthetic. FX' case stresses that consuming metal implies learning to recognize and appreciate its specific musical and sonic characteristics, its melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic structure, its playing and vocal techniques, its specific loudness, volume, and timber.[98] Newcomers are required to acquire a minimal base education to enjoy the metal's sound. In the process, they can usually count on discussions with fellow metalheads to explicit and make sense of the aesthetic and cultural norms that prevail within the genre. Reflecting upon his experience, Dimitri insisted on the process of mentorship which, according to him, characterizes the subculture. Newcomers can count on godfathers who will help them to develop their taste for, and knowledge of, specific sub-genres. This help, however, induces an obligation. Dimitri mentioned that the newcomer should be diligent in her or his effort to acquire a deeper understanding of metal music. Kahn-Harris (2007, pp122-127) notes that accumulating precise knowledge about metal music, its making and complex history, about the bands and albums as well as the practices and institutions of specific scenes is a relatively safe way to build mundane subcultural capital within metal scenes. As such, even if there is no responsibility to accumulate such knowledge, failure to do would greatly curb one's opportunity to become a full member of the community. Our own aesthetic acculturation reflected this opportunity/responsibility dyad. Overall, once we had signaled a base education in metal and earnest respect for the genre, members of the community were enthusiast to contribute to our artistic education. However, they also glared in disbelief, or stayed uncomfortably

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[98] Note that these norms are implicit and loosely defined. They partly depend on sub-genres and evolve over time. As a result, they leave much room for personal interpretations and negotiations.

silent, when we lacked knowledge they considered to be fundamental; when we had not listened to a seminal band in a specific subgenre or did not know about a specific drumming technique, for example.[99]

Mitigating Dimitri's account, we should stress that the type of vertical transmission implied by mentorship coexists with more horizontal transfers of knowledge. Discussing their entry into the genre, several informants described their metal education as a collaborative process which involved sharing and discussing discoveries with other newcomers, enacting a form of peer-based reciprocity. Furthermore, face-to-face interactions are not the only way to nurture these tastes. Metal magazines, such as Kerrang! or Metal Hammer, fanzines, such as Metallian, as well as an increasing number of websites and forums dedicated to metal or specific subgenres, offer an almost unlimited reserve of ideas, opinions, and opportunities to navigate the genre. The frequent posts which pop up on internet forums, asking for advices to discover a specific subgenre - as well as the debates triggered by such posts - manifest the existence and importance of aesthetic codes and classifications in the community (e.g. www.metalstorm.net).[100] Such resources, just like discussions with fellow metalheads or mentors, do not offer a direct confrontation of loudness. We discussed the difficulties textual and discursive forms have to represent the experience of sound when we introduced our projective methods (cf. 2. Structure and projective square). Reading about hearing protections online, for example, is likely to be poorly informative about the actual experience they imply. However, such acculturation can frame the way loudness is experienced by consumers. Online discussions about hearing protections have the potential to orient newcomers' attention to specific acoustic details when they finally experience the product in the concert house, such as the gain of clarity or loss of power. During our interview, FX for instance noted that his friends had

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[99] There are several interpretations possible to explain such a discomfort. At the very least, however, this observation indicates the stake sub-cultural knowledge represent in the community, a stake which our "expert" position might have magnified.

[100] Such posts frequently feature questions like: "What are the seminal bands for a specific subgenre (e.g. death metal, grind core)?" "What is your top ten in a specific subgenre?" "What albums can be considered to have started a specific subgenre?"...
See for example
http://www.metalstorm.net/forum/topic.php?topic_id=2260&topicsearch=&page=1

repeatedly told him that hearing protections improved the concert sound, back when he was still listening to live performances unprotected. Upon trying the product out, he immediately identified the aesthetic improvements his friends had mentioned, leading to adopt the product instantly and durably. Although we cannot build a correlation into causation, FX' case illustrates how the link some consumers make between their aesthetic experience and the discursive construction of this experience by other consumers.

The extent to which cultural norms constrain or guide the appreciation process is unfixed and depends on consumers. Some of the metalheads we talked with valorized apprenticeship highly and sticked closely to a metal dogma. Others had enjoyed a looser acculturation and socialization process and took more liberties with the good practices that prevail in the genre. Regardless of their compliance with this normative pressure, however, metalheads' consumption and valorization of loudness are always also personal processes. The road towards loudness might be paved but the negotiation and appreciation of live sounds are always subjective experiences. It is the subjective body that consumes loudness and enjoys or suffers its aesthetics. Individual consumers are free to reject the aesthetic norms of the genre or push its boundaries. Many of these norms are ultimately propositions rather than strict obligations.[101] They offer a repertoire of discourses, practices, and values consumers can try out and adapt. As such, the ways of the body that the metal culture offers, including the use or non-use of hearing protections, are potentialities that every consumer actualizes in a specific way, as illustrated by our discussion of loudness aesthetic control and let-go.

B. Ongoing agonistic and aleatory valorizations of loudness aesthetics

Finally, let us note that our chronological approach to agon and alea should not overshadow more ongoing valorization processes. Although consumers tend to settle upon the let-go—control axis over time, our discussions with metalheads suggest that agon and alea regularly resurface in consumers' appreciation process. Some metalheads, such as Alex, actually seem to dwell in agon as they constantly look for new challenging musical experiences, searching for

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[101] Some rules are stricter than others and will trigger sanctions quasi-systematically.

bands who will transgress their sonic expectations. The success of experimental and avant-garde metal concerts highlights some metalheads' taste for unexpected and potentially unsettling musical experiences. This agonistic valorization of loudness does not necessarily mean these consumers look for ever-louder experiences, but rather for different types of loudness, different textures, and materiality. The perpetual agon of live metal consumption is not reserved to an avant-garde audience, however. Even for less adventurous consumers, each new concert is an occasion to discover and negotiate a "new" loudness. Every band and sound engineer sculpts extreme sound levels in a particular way.

Sound engineers, who fine-tune the band's sound using a mixing console, indeed have a major responsibility in shaping the manifestation and consumers' experience of loudness. By featuring more prominently some instruments, or some frequencies (e.g. low or high pitches), they actively participate in defining the concert live sound. Several consumers noted that their influence constituted an important aesthetic alea during the concert. Matthieu, a metal enthusiast and concert organizer we met on February 27th 2013 at the Black Dog, mentioned that loudness is only partially correlated with the sound intensity, an idea supported by extensive acoustic and psychoacoustic research (Fastl and Florentine 2011, pp206-207, 213-214). For him, it is the sound engineer's work, beyond the strict sound intensity, which contributes to the sensation of loudness. This power and responsibility is acknowledged by most metalheads who can be adamant when it comes to what they consider to be poor sound settings. For several of our informants, using hearing protection is specifically a way to correct for deficient sound engineering. Antoine, who uses hearing protections on a regular basis although he would prefer not to, described them as a "rather radical means to get round sound engineers who do not do their job as they ought to." His opinion was shared by several metalheads, such as Sylvia whose case we discussed earlier. Such positions towards sound engineers forcefully remind that, although many sonic elements escape their control, consumers are co-performers of the concert sound. It also identifies a source of interference which motivates occasional protection users to self-protect. For them, the aesthetic reason to use

protections is not to handle a generic noise inherent to live settings, but to correct more specifically a human mistake.

III. Conclusion

Loudness, within the metal community, is as a dynamic and multi-plane object which takes different meanings and values depending on consumers and situations.[102] More than a sonic object, it is a co-performance involving the band, sound engineers, and consumers. Through their active management of sound, including the decision to use or not to use hearing protections, consumers mold their subjective experience of loudness to find, in the band's performance, the aesthetics they prize. This finding has significant implications for marketing theory and practice, which we only outlined through our developments. We now pause to consider these implications in more depth.

First, our results emphasize that self-protection, for metal consumers, is, to a large extent, an aesthetic issue. Preferred listening practices are aesthetic choices which will influence the experience and appreciation of a live performance. This aesthetic concern came first in most our respondents' discourses, but is remarkably absent from current theories and public actions. In a different context, Block et al. (2011) mentioned how nutrition research systematically fails to consider the positive meaning and value of food consumption. We can only support their call to reconsider the rich symbolic and experiential value of potentially self-destructive consumption practices in order to create more adapted and relevant public health theories and policies. Failure to do so will not necessarily condemn existing policies, which have proved, over countless studies, sometimes in naturalistic settings, to be efficacious. However, focusing exclusively on loudness detrimental effects deprives policy makers and scholars from rich resources as they engage consumers. Taking into acccount loudness' meaning, value, and the complexity of its experience would provide additional leverage to promote protective solutions. By way of example, policy-makers might consider presenting

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[102] We use the term multi-plane to designate the vertical articulation of values that constitutes loudness' meaning (instrumental, medial, base).

hearing protections as a listening technology, as a way to sublimate the aesthetic experience. Such rhetoric might not be efficient for every listener. Consumers who appreciate the brutality and raw character of live sound levels would resist such an argument. However, those metalheads who place a higher value on clarity and cleanliness would most likely consider such propositions positively.

To leverage hearing protections' aesthetic potential efficiently, however, policy-makers should not stop at the rhetorical level; but work on a broader reform of health policies involving both public institutions and private stakeholders. In order to reinforce and rehabilitate hearing protections' aesthetic value, protection manufacturers might consider partnerships with major and respected music equipment manufacturers (e.g. BC Rich, Marshall, Gibson, Mesa Boogie). Bundling middle-end protections with expensive music gear (e.g. guitars, amplifiers) would help to push the product through channels enjoying a firm legitimacy in the metal community; reinforcing the product association with aesthetic sophistication and pleasure. Furthermore, active musicians, who would benefit from such bundling, usually enjoy positive reputations within the community as music-making can contribute to accumulate sub-cultural capital (Kahn-Harris 2007, p126). Their expert position and facilitated access to quality products would facilitate the product diffusion within the community or, at least, foster a well-informed and rich debate among metal music consumers. Our discussion of aleatory valorizations of loudness' aesthetics indicates that such a debate might be an efficient way to change behaviors within the community. A comparable and potentially complementary solution would consist in working on branding strategies (e.g. co-branding, licensing). Experienced hearing protection manufacturers could collaborate with well-established instrument makers, thus reinforcing hearing protections' aesthetic connotations.

At a more fundamental level, we can only encourage manufacturers to work on the product itself. Designing hearing protections that would be more respectful of the live sound might greatly facilitate their adoption among concert-goers. Some major protection manufacturers have worked in that direction. However, it appears these solutions still have to reach a large part of

the community. This assessment could lead to different and, to some extent complementary, solutions. Protection designers could, for example, consider differentiating their low-end product line. Most brands currently propose either low-end noise reduction products or middle to high-end musical filter solutions (www.quies.com).[103] Proposing a low-end musical solution, which would not leverage the "reduction" lexical field and imagery and propose a different spectral correction,[104] might lead less fortunate and dubious consumers to try these products before upgrading to higher-quality products. Strictly speaking, these solutions do not depend directly on public policy-makers' prerogatives. However, public institutions might intervene in the process by allocating fund for acoustic research, facilitating discussion between stakeholders, or communicating on the wide range of solutions available to consumers. Designing such a reform should obviously involve the different stakeholders in the process. The suggestions we propose next are, therefore, meant to illustrate our argument rather than give definitive solutions. Such recommendations, however, constitute opportunities which should be seriously considered.

Second, our findings emphasize that consumers value extreme sound levels, not in and of themselves, but for their ability to manifest power. Even the most fervent supporters of hearing protections acknowledged extreme sounds' contribution to the concert aesthetic. This result paves the way for alternative approaches to deafening sound consumption. It notably invites to let the following question guide further reflections on the issue: how can the music communicate power without being deafening? Working on concert house architectures and equipment might help to communicate power while decreasing sound pressures (Fastl and Florentine 2011, pp 206-207, 213-214). Sound engineers' training should also receive some attention. Sound engineers are, ultimately, co-producers of the live sound. They play a key role in shaping the experience of power prized by metalheads. They might, therefore, be key agents of change. We certainly lack the skills to provide a thorough solution to

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[103] http://www.quies.com/produit/music-acoustic-filters/ and http://www.quies.com/produit/foam-earplugs/

[104] As mentioned in a previous note, sounds are composed of a range of frequencies (i.e. a spectrum). Hearing protections do not reduce all these frequencies equally. As such, they do not only reduce the sound intensity, but also transform its texture. Different spectral corrections therefore impact the subjective perception of sound differently, and can be more or less respectful of the music they protect from.

this riddle. Acousticians and psycho-acousticians, as well as acoustic architects, would be better equipped to offer such answers. However, this short discussion illustrates the types of alternatives strategies that might be designed by acknowledging loudness' positive meaning and experiential value.

Finally, our last key contribution relates more directly to the consumer health psychology literature. At the heart of the metal aesthetic lies a fundamental tension between let-go and control, between the direct, raw, brutal, and almost bestial expression of power and a tighter, more technical, and civilized one. This tension forcefully reminds the dichotomy which structures consumer health discourses (cf. III. The cult of control). However, while consumer health psychology advocates the strict exclusion of the more bestial form of power to the profit its civilized counterpart, the metal aesthetic rests upon their confrontation and negotiation by consumers. It reminds that the two terms of the dichotomy are not mutually exclusive. They can coexist, at the individual and collective levels. Individually, most consumers appreciate both the music raw power and the precise technicality it involves. Every consumer combines and negotiates these facets of the metal sound in highly personal ways, sometimes valorizing technical control over sheer brutality, or the opposite. However, even the ideal cases we discussed were not pure positions. Alex and Jean-Baptiste mentioned their attraction to both the primal brutality of the metal sound and the musical discipline metal performances require.

Collectively, it is noteworthy that despite disagreements over what the ideal musical experience should be, metalheads animate a shared aesthetic community. The coexisting valorizations of let-go and control do not threaten the social bond that relates metal consumers. This coexistence is not always harmonious. Aesthetic disagreements can lead to conflicts that spawn new sub-genres. However, these transformations participate in a constant process of evolution rather than resolve in the catastrophic disappearance of the metal genre and community, a point we will further develop in chapter VI (cf.

Chapter VII: The politics of loudness). At the individual level, some consumers can have difficulties to conciliate these two valorizations. Enjoying the music technicality sometimes requires forsaking some of its raw power. Sylvia, for example, that she sometimes resorted to hearing protections when the sound was just too loud, losing some power in the process but gaining the clarity necessary to understand the musical performance. Taken together, these considerations challenge the fear that fuels consumer health psychology. Control and let-go are not dichotomous alternatives, as much as intertwined modes of engagement with music and the world.[105] Such precisions bear hope for policy-makers as they imply that positions within the community might be subject to gradual change. These gradual changes, involving smaller deviations from preferred practices are likely, to be easier to implement than more radical actions construing and presenting self-destruction and protection as an all-or-nothing dilemma.

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[105] Our reader might object that this is "just" music. Discussing aesthetic preferences would not be relevant to the ways people manage pleasure, health, and destruction at the individual and social levels. We cannot address this objection fully without introducing a heavy theoretical framework. We therefore chose to leave this objection unanswered. We will, nonetheless, use this note to indicate the theory we would have leveraged to address this question more completely. Performative social science, or PSS, is a research stream that approaches society through its cultural performances. It argues that aesthetics, epistemology, and ethics are confounded, that knowledge is power as well as an aesthetic enactment (Denzin 2001). The true, the beautiful, and the morally desirable merge in the performance of social life. As such, aesthetics are powerful ways to construe and experience our social world and the broader human experience. In this perspective, the ways metal consumers construe and experience musical sounds constitutes, in and of themselves, critiques of, or alternatives to, consumer health psychology's dichotomist imaginary.

Chapter VI: Transgressing boundaries: Loudness as a sacred experience

Suggested listening:

- Aerosmith – Dream on [Live] (1973)
- Slayer – Raining Blood [Live] (1986)

In 2010, Metalhammer, a prominent magazine dedicated to the metal music and culture, campaigned to get heavy metal recognized as an official religion in the British census (www.metalhammer.co.uk).[106] The magazine won its case and, in 2011, more than 6200 British citizens declared heavy metal to be their official religion (www.theguardian.com).[107] Metal song and album titles overflow with religious references[108] and the religious rhetoric is frequently leveraged during concerts. For instance, during our October 22nd 2012 observation, Angela Gossow, the lead singer of Arch Enemy, a well-established melodic death metal band, asked the audience whether it was ready to "practice some heavy metal religion" as a way to foster its participation in the concert. These references might appear as playful provocations, reactions to media's tendency to portray metalheads as Satanists or devil worshippers (Christie 2003, pp290-303). However, we suggest they rather rest upon a widespread understanding and experience of the metal culture and community. Early observations sessions during metal concerts alluded to the spiritual dimension of the experience. The similarities we observed between the tribal rites described in anthropological research and the concert performance, including social interactions as well as the organization of space and time, urged us to take this analysis further. Previous ethnographies of the community comforted us in our decision. Weinstein (2000 [1991], pp199-235) presents the concert as an epiphany where the sacred dimension of metal music is revealed through the shamanistic action of the band. She argues that the concert is the

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[106] http://www.metalhammer.co.uk/news/the-guardian-metalheads-will-not-be-able-to-unite-for-heavy-metal-as-a-religion-census-campaign/

[107] http://www.theguardian.com/uk/blog/2012/dec/11/census-data-released-live-coverage

[108] From Judas Priest's 1980 song *Metal gods* to Amon Amarth 2013 album *Deceiver of the gods* and its musical take on Norse mythology.

occasion for metalheads to unite in a shared ecstasy, which transcends individuals into an idealized community.

In this chapter, we propose to further explore these preliminary insights and discuss the spiritual value of loudness. We will highlight how it participates in the achievement and experience of the sacred. Before we proceed, we should introduce two threats that loom over such a study. The first risk is to enter into a broader ethnography of the concert experience. As will be argued later, the orchestration of the sacred relies on a complex system that involves multiple practices, discourses, and performances. As such, we will need to situate loudness within a broader consumption context to explain its importance for metal consumers. We should, nonetheless, retain a focus tight enough to develop a deep and thorough understanding of loudness' role and value in the process. The second challenge in addressing loudness spiritual value results from the elusive dimension of the sacred. Duvignaud (1984 [1973]) argues that the sacred, manifested in the feast, escapes language. The verbal, and especially the written word, fail to represent the sensual and subversive potential of ecstasy. The feast precisely allows critiquing and escaping the prison of language (Duvignaud 1984 [1973], p244). There is, therefore, a fundamental contradiction in trying to write about the sacred from his perspective. Bataille (1953, p35-36), as for him, presents eroticism and the sacred it performs as aspects of one's inner life. As a result, any attempt to discuss the sacred, he argues, calls upon a subjective understanding and experience of the concept. It requires approaching and discussing the sacred from *within* and not as an objective observer. This dimension further complicates the task of writing and communicating about the sacred for an external reader. In the following pages, we will, therefore, attempt to *delineate* the sacred in the loudness consumption experience in order to guide our reader towards an intimate understanding of its importance and meaning. This endeavor will require evolving at a relatively abstract level and appealing to our readers' own spiritual experience.

We will open this discussion with a definition of the sacred, focusing on the notion of sacrifice. Building on seminal works by Georges Bataille and Jean Duvignaud, we will argue that the sacrifice performs the sacred as it

manifests and allows metalheads to experience the fundamental intertwinement of the limit and its transgression. We will highlight how the consumption of loudness, as a form of sacrifice, participates in the negotiation and transcendence of oppositions structuring the human experience: the civilized and the animal, life and death, control and let-go, the self and the other. Having defined the sacred, we will take a more specific interest in aleatory and agonistic valorizations of loudness from a spiritual perspective. We will discuss how individual and collective practices facilitate, and often condition, metalheads' achievement of transcendental experiences. We will argue that this achievement requires an active engagement with sound which does not entirely depend on the individual consumer. This study will, therefore, allow us to further discuss the interplay of the individual and the collective in the consumption and valorization of loudness. Altogether these findings indicate that loudness consumption, and the self-destruction it can cause, participate in deep anthropological processes, resting upon and performing a particular understanding of the world. By way of conclusion, we will relate this sacrificial valorization of sound to consumer health psychology's own spirituality, as manifested through its symbolic construction of the body, health, and self-destruction. We will finally consider our developments' implications for marketing practice, including the promotion and design of self-protections.

I. Limits, transgression, and sacrifice: A sounded definition of the sacred

In order to address the spiritual dimension of loudness consumption, we should first introduce two elements of definition which will guide our analysis. First, what do we mean exactly when we use the words "spiritual" or "spirituality"? In our context, these terms qualify practices and performances which involve a sacred quality or experience. We will, for example, argue that the sensorial experience of loudness is a spiritual process as it prepares for the sacred and is sacred itself. Obviously, this definition calls for another one: what is the sacred? This issue is more delicate to answer in a simple and concise manner. The sacred is elusive and subject to a multitude of definitions and approaches

which occasionally contradict each other. In the next pages, we will present different definitions of the sacred and discuss their relevance with respect to consumers' experience of sound. Our objective is not to find the "best" definition but rather to identify the one which appears the most appropriate, i.e. the closest to consumers' experience.

In the field of marketing research, Belk et al. (1989) offered what is often considered to be the first systematic approach to the concept. Drawing heavily on seminal works by Emile Durkheim and Mircea Eliade, the authors define the sacred through its properties. This approach is convenient to *sense* the presence of the sacred in the loudness experience. For example, Belk and his colleagues note the kratophanous power of the sacred, i.e. its ability to elicit strong approach and avoidance tendencies simultaneously (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989, p6). Some of our respondents described loudness in such terms. Antoine, for example, compared hearing protections, which he uses when he does not forget them, to a chastity belt, shielding the consumer from a danger she or he acknowledges but fervently desires. Mystery is another property which applies remarkably well to loudness. The sacred is impervious to cognitive understanding, calling for emotional and experiential responses rather than rational thoughts. Our respondents' difficulty or refusal to talk in depth about their relation to loudness manifests such a mysterious quality. As we mentioned our subject of investigation, many metalheads acknowledged the task difficulty or even its absurdity. We might continue to list these qualities and apply them to loudness consumption. However, such a discussion would emphasize the sacred character of loudness without really considering its value and importance for consumers. To address this issue, we will have to define the sacred not through its properties, but rather through the principles that underlie these properties.

A. The sacred as transgression

The sacred, we argue, notably lies in the transgression of established boundaries otherwise held as impassable. The concept of transgression briefly surfaces in Belk and his colleagues' discussion. However, it is addressed in much more depth by two authors, who will provide the theoretical foundation

to our upcoming developments: Jean Duvignaud and Georges Bataille. Although they present it in different terms and contexts, both these scholars define the sacred in relation to the limit. The sacred is an experience or research of continuity which breaks with an ontological discontinuity of beings. For Duvignaud (1984 [1973]), the limit takes two complementary meanings. It is first a form of civilizing norm. The feast, which celebrates and achieves the sacred, is an anomic event. It subverts and destroys, albeit ephemerally, the cultural rules of civilization to return to a more primitive social state. In the process, the feast engages its performers in a trans-objective and trans-subjective experience where individual consciences and bodies merge, an occasion for multiple independent substances to blend into a unique and continuous one.[109] Bataille (1957) approaches the issue from a different perspective, but his conception shares some core similarities with that of Duvignaud. Studying and relationg different forms of eroticisms, Bataille defines the sacred as the research and ephemeral experience of a lost continuity which will only be found again in death. The sacrifice, from this perspective, is a metaphorical or literal murder which briefly allows the participant to reconnect with the other at the most intimate level through the orchestration and contemplation of death. Next, we discuss these conceptions with respect to sound consumption and highlight the sacrificial dimension of the loudness experience during metal concerts.

Loudness as spiritual let-go

Loudness blends remarkably well in such conceptualizations. It appears as both a symbolic and corporeal transgression. It blurs the limits between the self and the other while violating the cultural norms that socially restrict relations to the body. Aurally, loudness rushes through the auditory canal, a dark tunnel descending into unfathomable depths. Corporeally, it runs through the skin. Along the way, it punches internal organs and rattles listeners' ribcages. Loud sounds are not only auditory sensations, but also interoceptive ones, i.e. which are felt within the body. The consumption of loudness is an intrusion of the

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[109] Duvignaud refers to Descartes' concepts of "res extensa" and "res cogitans" which do not have equivalents in the English language. We use the term "substance" although a more accurate, but awkward translation might consist in talking about an "extended thing".

other *under* the skin. As such, it constitutes a rare and potentially powerful threat to the human sense of individuation. Marzano (2007b, p29-35), building on the psychoanalytical work of Anzieu as well as Orlan's artistic experimentations, argues that the skin normally offers a separation between the "I" and the "not-I". It delimits the individual. From this perspective, loudness violates the tangible boundary of individuality and threatens the consumer's control over her or himself. Similar, or even more acute, sensations can occur in different contexts, after an organ transplant, for example, where the sense of self is destabilized by the intrusion of the other at the most intimate level (Marzano 2007b, p53-58). A particularity of sonic transgression within the concert house, however, is that it is, to a large extent, shared by the different concert-goers. As it threatens the consumer's sense of individuality, loudness also opens to a sensation of continuity with the other. It is simultaneously intimate, in the etymological sense of the term,[110] and relational, weaving a continuous link between bodies.

This transgression is not only somatic, but also symbolic and cultural. It violates the principles that govern relations to the body in modern societies. We introduced these principles in our theoretical section. The body, in communication societies, should be silent. It should fade to allow smooth social interactions (Le Breton 2011 [1990], 2012 [2002]). This erasure does not only require the body's appearance to meet the standards of its time (e.g. being in proper shape). It also implies shutting up, sometimes in a literal sense, its internal voice. Over the course of centuries, the civilizing process progressively exiled any manifestation of the body's internal life: flatulencies, belches, halitosis, sweat… (Detrez 2002, p100-112). Extreme sound levels, on the other hand, forcefully remind and feed this internal life. The consumer's eardrums, ribcage, stomach, and gut vibrate and pulse with every new beat of the bass drum. The first few notes of a song can send shivers down one's spine, electric waves crawling under the skin. This internal movement often takes loud and brutal expressions as metalheads let go through shouts or violent dancing, breaking the corporeal silence normally enforced (Detrez

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[110] The word "intimacy," in its etymological sense, refers to the "innermost" (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intimate%5B1%5D?show=0&t=1400592312).

2002, pp111-112, cf. 1. Compartmentalization in consumer health psychology). The music's loudness feeds a circulation, endless in the concert time, between the outside and the inside.

The experience of this inner life directly violates the corporeal ethics celebrated in consumer health psychology (cf. 1. Compartmentalization in consumer health psychology). The pleasure of loudness lies, among other things, in the visceral excitation it creates. Thomas, a 23 years old metalhead who advocates the legal obligation to use hearing protections in concert, noted that decreasing legal sound level thresholds would not be an acceptable solution to reduce recreational hearing loss. He opposed such a solution notably because it would deprive him from the pleasure of feeling the sound waves in his stomach, of experiencing the "physical feel of the music." There is, obviously, a more direct and manifest subversion at play in the consumption of extreme sound levels. For consumers who do not self-protect, it constitutes a self-destructive practice which contradicts the ideal of self-preservation underlying the capitalist society (cf. A. The performance logic). However, focusing on interoception contributes to explain how the consumption of sound can constitute a cultural transgression not only for bare listeners, but also for protected consumers. Furthermore, it illustrates the intertwinement of the somatic and symbolic in the spiritual experience. The interoceptive potential of sound transgresses simultaneously the physical boundaries that separate beings and the social norms that orchestrate this separation (cf. 2. Performing oneself).

B. Loudness as spiritual control

So far, we mainly approached loudness as a spiritual let-go. We argued that it participates in a dual movement, blurring the boundaries between the self and the other while violating several of the socio-cultural norms underlying the communication society (individuation, silence of bodies, self-preservation). In line with our semiotic interpretive paradigm, we now consider to what extent loudness, control, and the sacred intertwine in the concert experience. Our intention is not to understand how consumers control the revelation or achievement of the sacred. This topic will be addressed in our next section (cf. B. Loudness as spiritual control). It is rather to understand to what extent the

spiritual experience of loudness might be, in and of itself, an experience of control. Coming back to Bataille and Duvignaud's discussion of the sacred is interesting to that extent.

Despite a common interest in the limit and its alteration, the two authors approach the issue with different emphases. For Duvignaud, the feast is an anomic event. It "destroys every rule rather than it transgresses them" (Duvignaud 1984 [1973], p55). The sacred it performs is the destruction of culture through culture which opens to a cosmic unity of individual substances. Referring to our semiotic square, the orchestration of the sacred, for Duvignaud, would tend towards a pure let-go position, reducing the contrary tension to a single term. Bataille, on the other hand, insists on the intertwinement of the limit and its transgression in the sacrifice. For him, "transgression is not the negation of the rule, but it exceeds and completes it" (p67). It implies acknowledging the limit that it transgresses. It is the reasoned violation of a taboo. Bataille's approach is dialectic. The transgression of the human limit originates from an animal movement of death and violence. However, this movement does not result in the experience of an anomic state of nature, but reveals and reinforces the rule it violates. This reinforcement is not an intensification as much as a richer articulation, a more profound agreement between the limit and its transgression. The sacrifice, therefore, is not only a morbid fascination for death. It is also a celebration, or rather a revelation, of life. Bataille (1957, p97) argues that early forms of sacrifice, literal murders, revealed, in death, the movement of life. The blood flowing and squirting from a freshly killed animal allowed sacrificers to contemplate and experience life gushing in its most impersonal form. Symbolic sacrifices would, therefore, constitute metaphorical reproductions of this liberation of life through death. In semiotic terms, the spiritual experience and social organization of the sacred would, therefore, result in the reinforcement of the contrariety which relates let-go and control, as well as a set of corollary tensions (i.e. animal—civilized, transgression—limit, death—life).

Our participation in concerts, our discussions with metalheads, and previous ethnographies of the genre direct our attention towards such a dialectical interpretation. In his ethnography of extreme metal music and its

community, Kahn-Harris (2007, pp27-49) argues that extreme metal enthusiasts' musical, discursive, and corporeal transgressions simultaneously materialize and overcome the abject. This tension is maybe the most perceptible in the music itself, as the speed and aggression of the metal sound requires a very skillful, focused, and controlled performance not to turn into a chaotic and incomprehensible ruckus. This tension also materializes in the ambivalent extremes which characterize consumers' corporeal performances within the concert house, oscillating between excessive drinking and asceticism, violent moshing and total stillness bordering paralysis (Kahn-Harris 2007, pp44-45). Dimitri, an active metal musician and journalist who developed various personal theories about the genre, pointed towards another similarity between Bataille's conception and the interplay of limits and transgressions within the concert house. He described unprotected listening as a form of punk and no-future self-destruction, comparable to drug or sexual excesses such as those represented in the movie adaptation of *Fear and loathing in Las Vegas* (Gilliam 1998). However, he also pointed out the positive aspect of this seemingly fatalistic race, mentioning that "If we [metalheads] always talk about death, it is to better enjoy life." The violence, the animalistic and fatal movement which pervades the metal culture, its sound, and performance participates, according to Dimitri, in a search for life. This assertion reminds forcefully the very sentence which opens Bataille's *Eroticism*, "Of eroticism, it is possible to say that it is assenting to life up to the point of death." (Bataille 1957, p13).

Loudness, we argue, participates in this dialectics. As argued previously, loudness transgresses the limit between the "I" and the "not-I." It opens the body, revealing and exposing its internal life to the other. It allows the consumer to peer into the vertiginous abyss of death and experience its continuity. However, experiencing the violence of sound also appears as an experience of control. The polar somatic stances Kahn-Harris describes, i.e. violent dancing and total stillness (Kahn-Harris 2007, p45), both imply the expression of an individual power that overcomes the sonic transgression. While some metalheads join the great mass of metal through contemplative trances, staying still, mostly silent, and enjoying the performance with

transfixed gazes; others engage in ecstatic demonstrations of power through moshing or other dancing practices such as headbanging or stage diving. Both these performances appear to overcome, albeit in different ways, the tremendous violence of sound. The stoic impassibility of contemplative consumers manifests quite directly an ability to resist the violent animal movement which grips viscera and rattles ribcages.

The case of ecstatic dancers, or moshers, is slightly more complex and counter-intuitive. These consumers appear completely possessed by the wild movement of sound. Their chaotic gesticulation and frenetic jumps, runs, and swirls echo the beast that struggles and jerk facing imminent death. A closer look at these outbursts, however, paints them as conjointly chaotic and strictly controlled. Their violence is contained. Metalheads who engage in moshing are always expected to respect rules, which partially depend on the sub-genre considered. These rules for example include the prohibition to hit other participants in the face. It is interesting to note the civilized character of such a norm. Protecting the face is protecting the *persona* in its etymological sense. It is protecting the actor's mask which defines our social roles (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/person). The body can be bruised and swollen but the social face is to be protected. Another rule of the pit, frequently mentioned by metalheads, is the duty to systematically pick up a fallen dancer. Most metalheads do not only respect this duty, but also take certain pride in the solidarity it manifests and self-control it requires. Like the protection of the face, solidarity is a typically humane trait, at least in an imaginary which opposes the animal violence to the humane respect of the limit. The bestial movement is indiscriminate, rampant, and total, sweeping away everything in its path. It does not leave space for solidarity. In light of these considerations, moshing is a dialectics. It liberates bodies, allowing the expression and experience of loudness' transgression, of its violence and movement; but in doing so, it also opens to the expression of the human in epic conditions. Moshing epitomizes, it synthesizes the animal violence that fascinates man, and the power with which the human imposes its clout on this very violence.

Finally, an issue that rests to be addressed is the relation which ties loudness to the maintenance of civilized individuation. We pointed out that loudness could contribute to the sensation of continuity with the other, whose pursuit constitutes the core principle of the sacred for Bataille. Our dialectical approach entices us to search, in sound consumption, the expression and experience of a fundamental discontinuity, to consider whether and how loudness contributes to detach the individual from the other. Our previous paragraph pointed out that the sonic transgression within the concert house coincides with the acknowledgement and reinforcement of the prohibition it transgresses. Similarly, it is reasonable to assume that the sonic transgression of the skin emphasizes the limit that it usually constitutes. This interpretation is consistent with the anthropological and philosophical theories about the body we discussed in our theoretical section.

The intrusion of the alien under the skin, during a surgical operation or after an organ transplant for example, is a strong reminder that the body normally delimits the individual. These extraordinary violations highlight the limits and prohibitions protecting the intimate, which otherwise appear as natural and taken for granted. Loudness, as it shakes the body, and violates established boundaries has the potential to be such a forceful experience. The ways some consumers describe their contemplative trances is telling in this respect. Discussing past concert experiences, Thomas, for example, described his feeling of isolation, of being in a bubble, as he withdrew within himself and the music. He noted the penetrating and visceral experience of sound, which greatly contributes, according to him, to the concert aesthetics. However, he construed and lived this alien penetration as an occasion to enjoy a very personal and intimate experience. His narrative, echoing several other consumers' discourses, illustrates how welcoming and acknowledging the other at the most intimate level can ultimately contribute to a reinforced sense of individuation.

C. Sacrificial preservation?

In sum, consumers' spiritual valorizations of loudness appear to rest upon extreme sounds' ability to manifest the intertwinement of the limit and its

transgression, as well as a set of corollary tensions underlying the human experience: control and let-go, life and death, the animal and the human, the self and the other, continuity and discontinuity, the limit and its transgression. It does not only manifest these contrarieties, but also offer consumers the opportunity to experience and overcome them symbolically and somatically. Given our study's managerial motivation, our developments call for a discussion of hearing protections' value in this spiritual process. At first sight, their use appears to contradict quite clearly the sacrifice which performs these tensions. Hearing protections preserve the body. They shield it from death. They slow down the violent and animalistic movement of sound. They also create, according to most our respondents, negative feelings of seclusion and isolation which forcefully contradict the continuity core to the sacred experience. As such, they would constitute hindrance to the enjoyment of a rich spiritual life, which would explain why some metalheads refuse to self-protect. This account, although seducing and manifest in some consumers' discourses, calls for nuances.

First, our discussion of interoception emphasized that the sensations of continuity and movement loudness creates are not only aural. They build on a broader somatic engagement with the music. As such, the use of hearing protections does not preclude the experience of sound's animalistic movement at a deep somatic level. It is, therefore, compatible with experiences of continuity and losses of self. Second, the literal sacrifice of flesh, be it through the blade of the shaman or the deafening power of sound, is here to emphasize the inner life that animates the body (Bataille 1957, p97). As such, the biological degradation it implies is not a prerequisite to the sacred experience. It is only a powerful way to achieve it.[111] Using hearing protections is, therefore, theoretically compatible with the sacred.

Our respondents' narratives, and the practices observed during concerts, manifested both positions. For some respondents, earplugs did hinder immersion. These consumers explained and described how they were able to

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[111] The case of symbolic sacrifices, such as the Christian communication where the body and blood of the Christ is exposed and consumed, further stress that the actual consumption of the body is not absolutely necessary.

dive into the music as they took their earplugs off, how protections prevented from being in the now and here of the performance. However, some other consumers did not appear to experience such hindrance. It was the case of Thomas, which we discussed previously. For him, using protections was entirely compatible with a contemplative enjoyment of the concert. Among other developments, our next section will attempt to solve this discrepancy. We will emphasize how relations to loudness participate in consumers' preparation to the sacred. We will focus on the making of the sacred, rather than on its experience itself. This separation is logical rather than experiential. The preparation to the sacred is, in and of itself a sacred experience (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989). However, we suggest to make this distinction in order to cast further light on the reasons why consumers might, or might not, use hearing protections.

II. Preparing for the sacred: Roads to sacrifice

The transcendental states some consumers reach during concerts do not simply happen. They require a preparation, a non-let-go or agon, which conditions access to heightened experiences. This preparation takes many forms. Some metalheads' systematic consumption of beer before concerts echoes the ways mythical Norse heroes consume kvasir or ragweed to provoke their sacred rage (Duclos 2004, p36-39). Moshing is reminiscent of the panic dances described by Duvignaud as breaking up the world structured through language to achieve the sacred feast (Duvignaud 1984 [1973], p74-78). Some consumers, although rare, engage in ascetic practices as part of a purifying exercise aimed at more authentic experiences. Alex, for example, stopped eating meat, drinking alcohol, and having sex to get rid of the constraints that hampered his life and relation to the music. According to Belk et al. (1989, p7), such ascetic practices can participate in the sacrifice that conditions communication with the sacred. Some sub-genres have even turned asceticism into a common practice (Kahn Harris 2007, p44), a systematic code of conduct in face of the sacred. These are only illustrations of the preparatory rituals which frequently precede the concert experience. This preparation includes many other practices which guide approaches to transcendental experiences (Weinstein 2000 [1991], pp205-212).

In this section, we propose to consider the preparatory practices which precede and guide metal consumers' relation to sound. We acknowledge that writing about a road or preparation to sacrifice might seem redundant, at least from Bataille's perspective. The sacrifice itself is a preparation to, or rather a pursuit of, the sacred. It is the constant interplay of the limit and its transgression, achieved through collective and individual practices. The sacred, the experience of continuity, is always only an instant (Bataille 1957, p16), a brief hierophany which subsides immediately. However, we argue that this pursuit, itself, requires a preparation. The truth of death is not contained in sound. It is the active approach to loudness which offers consumers the opportunity to skirt and sometimes touch its continuity. The very decision not to use hearing protections participates in such a preparatory process. It is a deliberate movement towards the violence of sound.

This active position is particularly manifest among consumers who alternatively attend concerts, or some parts of the concert, protected and unprotected. These consumers, who represented a large part of protection users, sometimes decide to remove their earplugs for a specific concert or specific songs in order to enjoy the performance plenitude. It was, for example, the case of Olivier, a 34 years old metalhead who suffers from strong and recurrent music-induced tinnitus:

> Olivier: However, I sometimes take them off for the last two [songs]. For the encore. Because I…yes, because you can take, finally, the concert energy over 5 minutes. It's okay. I hold on. I know that a complete concert, after, during two days, it is going to ring loud and I will not sleep.

> Max.: What do you get out of taking them off?

> Olivier.: Well, I have the feeling of entering the concert. […] When you take them off, you are getting much more swamped. When you lower the sound, you lower the sound but you also lower the feeling that you have-physical-when it comes to the music's pulse. The floor that rattles; the bass drum kick which is too loud, and which runs through you, are a little disconnected from the music. When I take my earplugs off, I retrieve the entirety of the concert sensation.

For Olivier, the decision to remove his protections, even so briefly, participates in an attempt to open up to sound and enjoy the concert's wholeness. As he removes them, he enters the concert and the concert enters him, achieving the intertwinement of the outside and the inside characterizing the sacred. This short extract distinctly illustrates the themes which run through Bataille's study of *Eroticism*; but it also highlights the active and deliberate part the consumer takes in the process. For Olivier, bare listening is not a default choice, but an active attempt to enjoy the sound's transgressive and immersive potential. His time-related strategy further emphasizes the planning which underlies his approach to sound. Olivier preserves his hearing for the encore. His bare exposure to loudness coincides with the concert climax, with the figurative death of the concert audience and performers.[112]

This temporal management of loudness reveals the relative frugality of some consumers' relation to the sacred. For them, the concert is not *de facto* a spiritual experience. For instance, Nico, whose case we discussed in a previous chapter (cf. B. Damage acceptance.), differentiated mundane or profane concert experiences, motivated, for example, by political stakes (i.e. supporting his local scene), from more extraordinary occasions. Some rare bands deserved sacrificing his hearing and removing his hearing protections. Conversely, small local acts that meant little to Nico did not deserve such self-destruction. This frugality might seem to contradict the waste and abundance characterizing the sacrifice for Bataille. From a broader time perspective, however, it makes the waste all the more meaningful. In Nico's discourse, listening to a concert unprotected is burning a precious resource. Deciding to remove his protections is acknowledging the experience's power and consciously embracing self-destruction, even if this embrace is quickly repressed in the flow of the experience. This management of the sacred contrasts with that of consumers

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[112] In French, we would have used the term "petite mort", which commonly denotes the fleeting moment of ecstasy which sexual activities sometimes culminate in, and could be translated as "little death."

who never consider hearing protections; for whom every new concert is an occasion to get lost in sound.[113]

This brief discussion implies that there is no unique or strictly coded way to relate to the sacred. Just like different aesthetics coexist within the concert house, different approaches to the sacred and loudness animate its space. Some loose patterns are worth noticing and investigating, however. Such a pattern is the one that differentiates consumers who clearly frame hearing protections as hindrance to the trance from those who do not appear to mind them, an issue we had committed to address in the brief conclusion of our previous section. It appears the type of trance the consumer is trying to achieve contributes to explain this difference. The spiritual value of loudness does not appear to be fixed. It participates to transcendental experiences in different ways depending on the context. Dimitri exposed a dichotomy that summarizes quite adequately a discourse which was recurrent among our interviewees:

> Dimitri: There is a scene which is more serious, more philosophical, more introspective, and there is another one which is more an outlet actually. I think it is the big difference between the two. And it is true that, in that moment, I personally prefer not to have boule quiès for that type of band. Because you must live live this thing in the moment and not find yourself isolated, unlike how you find yourself with boules quiès. A little as a spectator.

Dimitri's comment echoes a broader tendency within the community to better accept hearing protections while enjoying concerts on a contemplative mode than an ecstatic one. Several consumers noted that it was easier for them to self-protect when they assumed a position of spectator. The sensory feeling of isolation protections create, a very robust element in our interviews, appeared compatible with the contemplative appreciation of a performance. However, they disturbed more active and ecstatic forms of enjoyment. Being an actor of the show, for example by participating in collective dances, appeared to

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[113] It is obviously impossible to make objective comparisons between different consumers' intimate experiences. We should, however, note that the frugality of sacred experiences did not appear to predict, one way or another, its richness or intensity.

conflict with the sensations of seclusion, rupture, and confinement stemming from self-protection.

We should bring two clarifications to Dimitri's theory, nonetheless. First, although we observed the differences between scenes he mentions in this extract, the genre and band's performance only partially guide the ways consumers enjoy their trance and broader relation to sound. Other factors, including individual preferences or sound settings, contribute to explain how specific consumers enjoy their spiritual experience. Second, the system of correspondence ecstatic-bare listening/contemplative-hearing protection is only a tendency. Some consumers appear perfectly able to enter ecstatic trances while using hearing protections. Conversely, some metalheads seem better able to dive into the music and enter contemplative trances when they remove their hearing protections. Still others consider that using protections is less of a hindrance in the spectator position than in the actor one, but would, nonetheless, prefer to enjoy as many performances as possible unprotected. Consequently, this tendency can certainly help to design new solutions to hearing impairment issues, solutions which would better respect the spiritual dimension of the experience. Practitioners and theorists should, however, be cautious not to use it as a pretext to dogmatic and categorical segmentations.

Finally, our theoretical and practical concerns led us to focus on sound as a condition of achievement of the sacred. Looking at and listening to the concert, however, emphasizes that relations to loudness integrate in a broader set of preparatory practices. We mentioned some of them in our introduction to this section (e.g. drug consumption, dances, asceticism, for a more systematic review cf. Weinstein (2000) [1991], pp205-212). Our focus certainly did not pay proper respect to the ties that relate these different practices. For example, dances likely influence the experience of sound, just as sound influences the experience of the dance. Our discussion of the forms of the trance points in this direction. The same goes for other types of preparation such as drug consumption. Taking into consideration such intertwinement would most likely bear critical insights for our understanding of relations to sound and health. We hope our reader will understand that space and time constraints led us to leave this discussion aside for the time being.

III. Spiritual alea: The collective achievement of the sacred

Our developments, so far, have insisted on individual conditions of production of the sacred. We presented the choice to use hearing protections, as well as other sacrificial and preparatory practices, as personal choices meant to facilitate access to transcendental experiences. However, looking into concert consumption emphasizes that these experiences are also the result of a collective effort, or at least require a collective presence. In this section, we highlight how the experience of the sacred depends on other consumers' proper behavior, notably from the sound perspective, as well as the band's and sound engineers adequate performance. We also note the role of existing cultural norms in guiding the sounded approach to the sacred.

Our interviews with metalheads and participation in concerts highlighted how others' sonic behavior can influence consumers' access to transcendental states. As a preliminary, we should clarify that the concert loudness does not entirely depend on the band's performance and technology.[114] The audience plays a major role in crafting the live soundscape, i.e. the acoustic environment of the concert. The way it sometimes sings along to well-known songs offers a blatant illustration of such contribution. The sound within the concert house, then, becomes more engulfing, intense, and powerful. The band's performance swells into an all-inclusive sonic storm. Growls, screams, stampede, and claps also frequently punctuate concert nights. They can be isolated and evanescent displays of vocal powers, violent and ephemeral outbursts quickly subsiding;[115] but, they are sometimes picked up by the entire audience, quickly turning into a collective uproar. The ways such sonic behaviors facilitate or hinder metalheads' spiritual experiences greatly depend on their privileged mode of spiritual engagement with the music and sound. Again, the distinction between contemplative and ecstatic trances constitutes a helpful anchor to our developments.

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[114] We have willingly left this dimension aside so far, as it was not directly relevant to our developments.

[115] These growls and songs can be agonistic. The objective is not only to shout loud, but also louder than the neighbor, as manifested by some metalheads vocal showdown.

Consumers who let-go primarily through ecstatic trances appear to thrive on others' loudness. As argued previously (cf. A. Agonistic valorization), metal's loudness can simultaneously empower and confront the listener. As such, it sets the sacrificial stage. It takes its toll on listeners, but simultaneously provides them with the means to overcome the sonic trial it poses. The mosh pit broader experience is based on this principle. Different respondents explained they enjoyed moshing because it simultaneously epitomized the brutal violence core to the genre identity, and the mutual care and support idealized by the community.[116] How the audience's loudness might participate in this dual process is quite straightforward. It is a sonic display of power to match; but it also manifests a community that somatically and symbolically supports the individual. The engulfing experience of the audience' loudness is an uplifting and exhilarating sensation. Although it was never in these exact terms, different respondents expressed the crowd's role in achieving a good concert. Antoine certainly came the closest to verbalizing this idea from a sound perspective. Antoine is a 29 years old metalhead who likes to spend the concerts he anticipates the most in the pit. He noted, during our projective interview, how he liked to be in the middle of things in these occasions, to give and receive some punches, and live a deeper concert experience. In two observation sessions he participated in (June 4th, 2009 and May 25th 2013), Antoine insisted on other metalheads' role in fulfilling his expectations and mentioned how he sometimes tried to manage it actively. Were the audience too tame or too quiet, Antoine would try to set the pit ablaze with a well-timed and powerful growl. In his opinion, such a growl can, as it is picked up by the crowd, set bodies into motion and liberate voices. Antoine's attempt illustrates how some consumers do not only count on others' proper sonic behaviors to achieve an ideal concert experience, but also attempt to influence these behaviors in a proactive fashion. In the process, they manifest the intertwinement of the individual and the collective in preparing for the transcendental experience.

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[116] We previously discussed the most common example of such a mutual assistance when we presented moshing best practices (cf. B. Loudness as spiritual control), namely that any dancer who falls is immediately picked up by the crowd, a case which happens frequently during concerts.

Other consumers' manifestations of loudness do not necessarily build up or contribute to the trance, however. They can be disturbing and break a privileged link to the music. Vocal outbursts, such as shouts and growls, can violently irrupt and pull the consumer out of her or his immersion, especially for contemplative consumers. We observed such an occurrence during a concert by Nadja on May 14th 2013 at Les Instants Chavirés in Montreuil. Nadja is an experimental metal band which plays drone, a subgenre that deconstructs classical musical structures to deliver very low, slow, and nagging sounds, lacking the pulse, speed, and aggression more ecstatic consumers appear to enjoy. As a result, the whole audience listened to the music in an almost religious silence, often with eyes closed or looking at a huge, hypnotic kaleidoscope projected on one of the side walls. Sometimes during the performance, a loud shout resonated. It felt out of place to me, and so did it to the metalheads gathered around me, who started looking around for the troublemaker. The individual came in the front of the stage, shoving and pushing aside the metalheads lost in the music before sitting on the edge of the stage. Nobody spoke a word, but nearby consumers glared in disbelief, passing what I interpreted as a silent but adamant judgment. This prototypical case illustrates how another consumer's loudness, be it vocal or corporeal, can hinder more contemplative trances by breaking what Le Breton would call, in a different context, the ritualized deletion of the body (Le Breton 2012 [2002], pp58-60) . It also contributes to explain why contemplative consumers better accept hearing protections. The sensations of seclusion and isolation they create might help the individual to withdraw and prevent unwanted sonic intrusions. A logical segue would lead to consider that the concert is a solitary experience for contemplative consumers, that the other is not necessary to live a rich spirituality. Our discussions with metalheads indicate otherwise, however. Even the most contemplative respondents, who appeared to enjoy the concert as an exclusive relation with the band and its music, required other consumers' clamor or presence to dive in the performance. This clamor only had to take the right form and intensity; and we touch here to the normative dimension of the spiritual experience during metal concerts.

The cultural norms enacted within the concert house are simultaneously constraints and guides for heavy metal consumers to develop more personal relations to the sacred. They constitute a catalogue of potential engagement with sound newcomers to the genre can pick from and adapt within more or less strict boundaries. As often, it is worthwhile to illustrate this idea with two examples which are not directly related to sound consumption. We noted how drugs could help to lose oneself in the music and the broader concert experience. Beer appears as a privileged drug within the community. Laure, an external observer who participated in a concert with us, described it as the "clan's drink" (June 3rd 2009). It is customary to see metalheads holding pints within the concert house and empty beer bottles piling up in and around the trash cans surrounding the venue. Beer, therefore, appears to constitute the drug of choice within the community. However, drinking something else is not disregarded, or at least does not call for sanctions. The same does not go for the ritual division of space. In particular, ecstatic and contemplative trances are spatially incompatible. The chaotic gesticulation of ecstasy would disturb the relative immobility and focus contemplation requires. The space within the concert house is, therefore, divided so that both modes of engagement with sound can coexist. Although its extent and exact form are usually loosely defined, the mosh pit is always located in front of the stage. Some strict rules govern this space as argued previously, giving participants the opportunity to let-go in favorable conditions, including the confidence that they will not hurt themselves or others. A contemplative consumer will have no right to ask for a relative calm in this area. Conversely, starting to mosh further back where calmer consumers usually stand would call for sanctions. Incidentally, the rare acts of non-ritualized violence we witnessed occurred when disagreements emerged over the definition of proper conducts within specific spaces.[117]

Similar codes appear to guide and regulate relations to sound. For example, it is perfectly acceptable, in most sub-genres, to sing along songs.

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[117] On November 28th 2011, while we attended a death metal performance by Trivium, a fight broke in front of us. Contrasting with the ritualized and strictly coded violence of the pit, a bulky metalhead assaulted a younger dancer with a headbutt before putting his guard up. Surrounding metalheads quickly broke the fight. Asked why he had acted in such a way, the metalhead told us that his victim was not dancing properly, punching others in the back instead of pushing and shoving. This breach of etiquette interfered with his experience of the concert. He spent some time on the edge of the pit, apparently disgruntled, before disappearing.

Over the years, some bands develop co-performance routines. Long-time fans, who have attended previous concerts by the band, know when they should sing, what musical phrase they should add their voice to, contributing to give live music its singular pulse. Newcomers to the band can listen to experienced metalheads and bring their voice to the chant, gaining the opportunity to join the communion of voices and spirits through the erotic respiration of sound. Shouting in-between song as a sign of support or appreciation is also acceptable and even encouraged by most bands. However, heckling or growling during a quieter ballad or in a more contemplative sub-genre can be disregarded. The Nadja's example we mentioned previously exemplifies such breach of etiquette. The extent to which existing rules frame the proper reception of sound, as opposed to its emission, is open to interpretation. If we accept that most behaviors within the concert house ultimately affect the reception of sound (e.g. dancing, location in the room, drug consumption, social interactions), we can also argue that listening practices are heavily regulated. The more personal choice of self-protection, however, does not appear to imply a strict behavioral code. Most metalheads construe this choice as a personal decision and deny external pressures to comply with a specific practice, be it bare or protected listening. As such, if the community bears some influence on consumers, it is most likely subtle and implicit, achieved through observation and conversations with metalheads; very much like it was the case for the valorization of loudness destructive potential (cf. III. Conclusion).

Finally, and maybe most obviously, we should highlight that the way the band and staff manage loudness is crucial to the consumer's spiritual experience. Weinstein compared the band to the shaman who reveals the sacred (Weinstein 2000 [1991], p88). Although our developments so far suggest that the sacred is performed and co-created rather than revealed, we can only support her shamanistic comparison. Without the band, there is no loudness to confront, obey, or overcome. The performer shapes the sound levels that condition consumers' access to the sacred. The specific techniques musicians use in the process are out of the scope of this dissertation. A musicologist would be better equipped to discuss these issues in a precise and

parsimonious way. We prefer to present two practices which emphasize that the orchestration of the sacred through loudness leverages elements that go beyond the strict rendition played by musicians.

First, the band does not only manage its own loudness but also the public's one. Experienced singers know when and how to exhort the audience to sing or shout, fostering the communion of voices and blurring the boundaries between the performance and audience space, diluting them in a single extended substance reminding Duvignaud's definition of the feast. As they are invited to sing along, metalheads become, for a brief moment, producers of the sacred experience they cherish. They merge with the band and other consumers through loudness. Second, the staff, and notably the sound engineers and tour managers, also contribute to orchestrate the sonic progression that culminates in the climactic outcome of the concert. It is common for sound engineers to increase progressively the sound levels over the night. The opening band will therefore play at a lower level than headliners, a phenomenon we observed on several occasions.[118] In doing so, sound engineers orchestrate the sensorial intensification of the night. They build up excitement and anticipation, guiding consumers towards ecstasy.[119]

IV. Conclusion

Loudness, in and of itself, is not sacred. Exposure to extreme sound levels can result in mundane experiences if the context is inadequate or the individual is not willing or able to open up to the other. However, as part of a broader set of individual and collective practices, loudness can contribute to make the metal concert a rich spiritual experience. Its consumption offers consumers the

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[118] We also supported this observation using cross-sectional data. On two occasions, we attended concerts featuring Children of Bodom, a prominent Finnish melodic death metal band. Each performance occurred in the same concert house (i.e. the Zenith in Paris). The first time (November 21st 2008), the band opened for two other artists, Machine Head and Slipknot. The consensus around the group of friends with whom we attended the concert was that the sound lacked power. We notably felt a gap between the lead singer's dynamism on-stage performance and the music acoustic tameness. This feeling was shared by different metalheads we met on other occasions who had also attended the concert. Conversely, when we attended another concert by the band on October 23rd 2013, we were struck by the overall loudness and power of its sound; undeniably breaking with the watered down version we had experienced previously. This feeling was shared by Baptiste, who had attended the first concert without us.
[119] We did not witness such a progression in underground venues, however. The first band usually played near the 105dB threshold.

opportunity to experience, at a deep somatic level, the intertwinement of life and death, control and let-go, the animal and the civilized, the self and the other. It allows metalheads to skirt with the brief moment of continuity where these contrarieties dissolve. The celebration and experience of these tensions underlies much of the ideal concert experience for most consumers, although it does not constitute an exclusive mode of appreciation and engagement with sound.

The spiritual valorization of loudness in the metal community bears several implications for marketing theory and practice. First, our fieldwork brought us to question and rethink *a priori* intuitions regarding metalheads' position towards hearing protections. As a working hypothesis, we had considered that the community might reject hearing protections as an intrusion of the profane into the concert sacred experience. Our observations and interpretations, however, tend to highlight a remarkable resilience of the sacred to such intrusions. Despite their clear medical connotations, some consumers are able to integrate hearing protections into their spiritual experience, sometimes in a prominent position (i.e. not only as a non-opponent but also, in some rare cases, as an adjuvant). These findings echo prior studies in consumer culture theory emphasizing how consumers sometimes sacralize products from the commercial sphere, despite their common association with the profane (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989; O'Guinn and Belk 1989). As such, our investigation bears hope for public policy-makers. It implies that their task is not necessarily to confront and overrule the spiritual dimension of the concert, certainly a daunting challenge, but to learn to work in agreement with this spiritual experience.

This resilience of the sacred does not entirely forestall some consumers' resistance to earplugs. However, it entices to consider more specifically on what grounds these consumers reject hearing protection. Our findings indicate that most consumers do not condemn the symbolic intrusion of the medical in the sacred experience, although it might unconsciously

underlie some discourses.[120] Metalheads rather criticize the feelings of seclusion and isolation stemming from existing protective solutions. Hearing protections hinder the intense circulation that relates the individual to the other, be it the music, the band, or other metalheads. These feelings contradict quite clearly the pursuit of continuity and dissolution which constitutes the sacred. Practically, this finding should motivate policy-makers, as well as protection manufacturers, to work on more open protections, from both symbolic and somatic perspectives. Symbolically, public communications might downplay the antagonistic rhetoric frequently leveraged to foster protection adoption. This type of communication often paints loudness as a purely aggressive and deleterious force.[121] While such framing can help to raise awareness about hearing loss issues and the need to self-protect, it simultaneously paint the solutions available as ruptures from sound (e.g. hearing protections, taking regular breaks during a concert). The effort towards more openness should not only be rhetorical, though. Working on the sonic and visual properties of existing protections might bear interesting results. Using transparent material or lighter forms would, for example, help to play down the connotations of isolation and confinement attached to earplugs.

Finally, we should remind that, for most consumers, the epitome of openness consists in not using protections. Therefore, as a long-term agenda, we can only repeat our invitation to work on less intrusive solutions to deafening sounds' issues. Such solutions might consist in working on concert houses' architectures and sound systems in order to foster a sense of sonic power and inclusiveness while keeping the volume relatively low. We acknowledge that we had reached some of these conclusions working on the aesthetics of loudness (cf. III. Conclusion). However, we believe this resurgence

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[120] As argued in our methodological section, and illustrated in these developments, our projective methods helped our respondents to access and express deeper layers of knowledge and experience. We cannot claim, however, to have drawn a complete picture of our respondents' subconscious. It is safe to assume that only a long and thorough psychoanalytical approach might lead to such a result.

[121] See for example, http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/news-and-events/london/news/hard-hitting-new-advertising-campaign.aspx (or Appendix 2 for a reproduction). This advertisement uses a metaphorical process which equates "loud music" to an "electric drill." This visual rhetoric transfers the qualities of the drill to loud music, stressing its painful, noisy, and potentially lethal potential. In doing so, it antagonizes music which is only considered for its harmful potential.

(1) contributes to reinforce our recommendations, (2) suggests alternative entries into self-destructive issues, and (3) points towards the intertwinement of the aesthetic and the spiritual in the loudness experience.

Finally, this chapter's empirical developments extend our theoretical reflections and open different breaches in consumer health psychology's project. Metalheads' relations to the sacred challenge quite directly core elements of the research stream's discourse and symbolic imaginary, notably its defiance towards close distances. The experience and valorization of loudness, sound, and the concert contradict the detachment logic which pervades consumer health psychology. Where the research steam advocates a twofold rupture from one's body and others (cf. B. The detachment logic), the spiritual valorization of loudness rests upon its ability to connect to the other in its different forms. Self-destruction is collective not only in its enactment but also in its end. It takes its meaning and experiential value from the collective practices and discourses that frame it, but also aims at the ephemeral point where the individual and the collective merge. The very end of the sacrifice is to experience this sense of continuity. Any recommendation to severe oneself from the other as a way to tackle self-destructive consumption practices is, therefore, profoundly antithetical.[122]

It is not only antithetical but also unnecessary. As argued in this chapter, some consumers are able to reconcile self-protection with the pursuit of proximity. Living a rich spiritual experience, flirting with death and the other, and staying healthy are not *de facto* contradictory goals. This finding tends to reinforce the idea that consumer health psychology's symbolic imaginary is not a state of affairs as much as a strategic construction. The research stream might reconcile these two values (i.e. self-preservation and continuity), but not without a profound reexamination of its political project, including its enactment through the specific methodologies, definitions, and rhetorical framings we presented in our theoretical chapter.

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[122] At least when we consider those practices which take a spiritual value for consumers. It is reasonable to assume that not all self-destructive consumption practices take on a spiritual value.

The specific issue of continuity and discontinuity heralds a more global discrepancy between consumer psychology's spiritual project and consumers' experience of self-destruction, loudness, and the sacred. The dichotomies consumer health psychology leverages, articulates, and regulates (i.e. control-let—go, civilized—animal, self—other, life—death) are central to the meaning, experience, and organization of the sacred. However, the preservation of a healthy body, according to the research stream, and the consumption of loudness appear to manage these tensions in radically different ways. While loudness consumption contributes to the reinforcement and intertwinement of these contrarieties, consumer psychology promotes their complete dissociation. It is a militant nonspirituality. It systematically favors one term of the opposition at the cost of the other.

We previously voiced our concerns regarding such an approach. This empirical investigation of the metal community indicates that this option is not entirely satisfying to some consumers either. This spiritual discrepancy might contribute to explain the relative inefficiency of existing approaches to self-destruction issues. Our observations, and the way we framed our study, does not allow to determine whether the consumption of loudness during metal concerts constitutes a resistance to dominant health discourses or a safety valve, a spiritual escape preceding metal consumers' reintegration in the mainstream society and its dominant spiritual system. Regardless, our findings should entice consumer health psychology and public policy-makers to reconsider the far-reaching implications of their actions. If loudness consumption constitutes a spiritual resistance, further forcing discontinuity upon consumers risks resulting in the reinforcement of this resistance, in line with firmly established theories of reactance in social psychology (Brehm 1966). If, on the other hand, it constitutes a safety valve, depriving consumers from a much needed spiritual rejuvenation might prove unethical and socially destructive. Either way, tackling self-destructive consumption practices will require reconsidering not only the value of self-destructive practices, but also the full significance of the project which took responsibility in curbing these practices; i.e. consumer health psychology and the social agenda it supports.

Chapter VII: The politics of loudness

Suggested listening:

- Amon Amarth – Guardians of Asgaard [Live] (2008)
- Sepultura – Roots Bloody Roots (1996)
- Pantera – Walk [Live] (1992)
- Eyehategod – Blank [Live] (1993)
- Liturgy – True Will (2011)

In the light of our theoretical and empirical developments, looking into the socio-political value of loudness appears inevitable. We previously argued that the body, its shape, management, and experience, are powerful leverages in the definition and enforcement of specific political projects (cf. II. Consumer health psychology as a political project). The profound experiential and biological effects of loudness, therefore, have potential for manifesting and enacting social and political values. Furthermore, music, and, per extension, its aesthetic characteristics have historically crystallized political transformations. With his history of music and noise, Attali (1977) illustrated how the changes in musical performance and consumption practices could help to explain the evolution of societies. The consumption of loudness, therefore, is located at the crossroads of two politically connoted objects and research streams: music and the body. It is, moreover, tempting to interpret the violent spectacle and performance of the genre as forms of transgression and political rebellion, reminiscent of notoriously engaged musical genres such as punk (Fox 1987).

And yet, upon inspection, this political dimension is not obviously manifested within the metal culture. On the contrary, metalheads frequently present their community as a non-political project. Openly politicized sub-genres, such as national socialist or red anarchist black metal, which respectively claim far right and far left political values, constitute niches, attracting a very small portion of the broader community (Olson 2011). Several metalheads we talked with took pride in this non-political stand, mentioning that anyone willing to enter the community would be welcome, regardless of their socio-demographics. Although we will shortly challenge this idealized

inclusiveness, we did observe a tendency to leave political affiliations at the concert house's door. Through face-to-face and online interactions, we were able to identify very different, and sometimes contradictory, political positions among metal consumers, ranging from far-right conspiracism and Islamist radicalism to much more moderate leftist and rightist positions. This diversity, however, never appeared to hinder the collective celebration of the metal culture during the concerts we attended, nor surfaced during concert-related interviews and discussions.

The political dimension of metal music consumption, production, and performance is, therefore, a puzzle. This puzzle requires our attention for conceptual and practical reasons. Practically, if metal and loudness consumption constitute political claims, answering these claims might help to curb self-destructive practices. Acknowledging the political motivations of self-destruction would allow working not only on the symptomatic dimension, but also on the deeper causes of this self-destruction. By way of example, Arnett (1996, pp155-170) defines metal and loudness consumption as an answer to the growing alienation of an American youth in need of strong sensations and belonging. In this case, reconstructing this feeling of belonging in the workplace, at school, in the family, and the broader American society would help to curb self-destructive behaviors in recreational activities. We believe Arnett's interpretation is simplistic, for reasons we will introduce shortly. However, it illustrates quite clearly how identifying the political claims performed through metal music might help to tackle the health issues it involves. Secondly, as we discussed consumer health psychology, we noted that our own political voice should not conceal the positions of metal consumers (cf. IV. Conclusion). The assumption which motivated this attention is that an open confrontation of stakeholders' divergent perspectives, including consumers, policy-makers, and academics, would result in richer, more creative, and better adapted solution to the issue at hand.[123] This chapter is, therefore, an attempt to (1) manifest the political significance of loudness

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[123] Such an assumption is political in nature. It reflects, to a large extent, our trust in the French democratic tradition.

consumption for metalheads, (2) in order to foster a richer public debate (3) based on a thorough understanding of the actors involved.

To address these issues, we will propose and motivate our own definition of the political. We offer to define as political what *is relative to the negotiation, enforcement, and maintenance of collective value systems.* This definition, which might differ from classical understandings of the term, is an attempt to think politics within the semiotic field. Such a definition is entirely coherent with our theoretical discussion of consumer health psychology. We positioned our work in a Foucaldian tradition which intimately ties knowledge and power. In *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of* reason, Foucault suggests that the very definition of madness along the reason—unreason semantic category, combined with the moralization of this dichotomy, served as a tool for psychiatry and psychology to comfort their political positions (Foucault 1972 [1968]). Although Foucault then proceeds to deconstruct this dichotomy, his work emphasizes the inter-definition of power, semiotic, and ethical structures and processes. In this framework, our definition is precisely a definition of the political, approached from an ethical and semiotic perspective.

Besides its integration into a semiotic theory, this definition has three qualities which will facilitate our discussion loudness political value. First, it does not restrict the practice of politics to traditional structures of power (e.g. parties, parliaments, governments). According to this definition, consumer health psychology or the heavy metal community can be considered as political institutions; even if outsiders and insiders do not identify them as such (e.g. few academic researchers would define their work as political). Second, this definition allows studying political stakes at different levels. It will give us the opportunity to consider the political value of loudness within the community, but also in this community's relation to other institutions, in particular to determine when loudness consumption within the community has potential for affecting dominant or mainstream value systems. We will argue shortly that this flexibility is crucial, considering that the political value of loudness greatly depends on the referential studied. Third, despite its harmonious integration in a semiotic theory, this definition does not restrict the

political to values, but also includes the mechanisms, norms, discourses, and practices which will perform these values. From a semiotic perspective, these elements constitute manifestations of underlying value systems and processes. They are, therefore, crucial to the political analysis of the community.

This chapter will take a specific interest in the instrumental value of loudness from a political perspective. Our previous chapters identified and discussed the base values loudness can have for metal consumers (i.e. epistemic, self-transformative, aesthetic, and spiritual). This chapter will discuss how loudness articulates these base values at a collective level. This focus will require referring back to our previous reflections to illustrate how loudness participates in the contestation, negotiation, enforcement, and maintenance of value systems within and across the community. We will divide our analysis of loudness' politics in three steps. We will, first, introduce and discuss more thoroughly the contradiction which underlies metalheads' relation to politics (cf. I. Defused contestation: Political relations to the other). We will describe the ambiguity created by the coexistence of spectacular manifestations of marginality and robust discourses of normality. In our semiotic square, this ambiguity corresponds to the agon—alea sub-contrary axis. It articulates a confrontation or non-let-go, manifested through self-stigmatizing practices, and an alea or non-control expressed through the discursive negation of any political claim or effect. Discussing this ambiguity will lead us to challenge the political and, more specifically, the subversive value of extreme sound levels. In a second moment, however, we will argue that loudness consumption, production, and performance do participate in the negotiation, reconfiguration, and maintenance of value systems within the community (cf. II. Loudness politics within the community: Diversification and homogeneity). Our developments will underline how loudness binds political and aesthetic processes to define and perform the metal ethos, as well as specific sub-genres' identities. Our third and last section will address whether and how the loudness orchestrated and experienced during concert affects collective value systems beyond the community (cf. III. Loudness politics beyond the community). Specifically, we will consider loudness consumption's potential for confronting and transforming dominant value

systems, manifested through specific conceptions of health and the body. This section will also evaluate the metal community's inward permeability to exterior values, and notably to what extent the consumption of loudness within the concert house, and the way it is interpreted by consumers, manifests the values promoted through public health communications. Taken together, these analyses bring loudness consumption back into a broader social debate regarding the body, health and self-destruction.

I. Defused contestation: Political relations to the other

Considering our previous chapters, the agonistic value of loudness in the metal community's relation to the other appears flagrant. Our discussions of loudness' epistemic, self-transformative, aesthetic, and spiritual value emphasized how sound consumption could confront and contradict dominant conceptions of the body, music, or proper relations to the limit (cf chapters III, IV, and V).

This contestation, occasionally takes a reflexive dimension. It is notably the case when metalheads discuss how the community and its music are perceived by outsiders (e.g. media, non-metalheads' friends, political personalities). Baptiste illustrates this idea in the following extract:

> Baptiste: But [in reggae concerts] you do not have…you do not have this closeness which is so present in the metal culture because…Precisely because it [the metal culture] is marginal. We have…There is an identity which is a little special and this is what we like. In my opinion. It is, at least what I think. Because it is a little marginalized. More than reggae I think.

> Max: Yes, because there more a vision of outsider. This is what you said: if only musically, it is noise.

> Baptiste: It is noise for people. And so much the better! Because we bask in people thinking that. And it makes us laugh. It is a little like that.

Comparing the reggae and metal culture, with which he is equally familiar, Baptiste argues that the stronger feeling of cohesion and solidarity he experiences within the metal community results from a shared pride in the

genre marginality. The alternative set of aesthetic values celebrated and performed within the community contributes to define its identity in opposition to "the people," a generic other. This idea was expressed in several interviews; and we also had the occasion to observe, during concerts and festivals, metalheads playing out anti-social activities such as pulling garbage cans to pieces (before fixing them up as carefully as possible), flashing their buttocks to cameras or bystanders, or shouting in the streets. Furthermore, metal lyrics, clothing, corporeal management, and on-stage performances frequently manifest values which are normally condemned, including war, violence, panic sexuality, racism, or over-the-top-machismo (Kahn-Harris 2007, pp27-49).[124]

The young adults we interviewed, however, frequently played down the significance of these overt contestations. They presented these practices and discourses as playful and tongue-in-cheek provocations. In the above extract, Baptiste emphasizes the comical character of marginalization, noting that this marginality reflects what people think about the community rather than what it really is. Several metalheads noted that the bulk of metal consumers are fully functional members of society; and most of those we met did appear to be. Our sample illustrates the wide range of metalheads' professional occupations. Baptiste, himself, is a sound engineer and audio plugin designer, a position which implies important responsibilities, including interactions with managers for major automotive companies. Nico teaches physical education to primary school students. He is also a young father who actively participates in the education of his child. As we were invited for dinner at his place, he was the one who cooked the meal, breaking with the macho gender stereotypes pervasive in the metal community. As such, performing metal's transgression during concerts (e.g. moshing, shouting, spitting…) or knowing by heart the lyrics to songs about death camps (e.g. *Angel of Death* by Slayer), gruesome murders (e.g. *Hammer Smashed Faced* by Cannibal Corpse), or womanizing (*That's what girls are for* by Steel Panther) does not prevent metalheads' from complying with dominant social expectations outside the concert house. As part of our ethnography, we did meet alienated individuals who experienced

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[124] Such themes by no means exhaust the rich and broad lyrical field leveraged by metal musicians. They, nonetheless, constitute firmly established traditions in the sub-culture.

difficulties developing a meaningful social life outside the strict boundaries of the metal community. Such marginality, however, did not constitute a structural feature of the metal population we met.

Extending this argument, it is interesting to mention the way several respondents discussed the pivotal role metal had played during their teenage years. Sandrine and FX, for instance, explicitly mentioned how metal consumption had crystallized a form of youthful rebelliousness against high school norms or parental values. They attached the consumption of metal, its culture and music, to dissatisfaction with available models and a desire for differentiation. In line with our previous developments, however, these respondents discarded this frontal confrontation as a normal adolescent process. They neutralized its impact by reducing a potential claim to alternative collective values to an individual crisis or moment. FX directly related his initial decision not to use hearing protections to being an "overgrown teenager." Such discourses manifest quite clearly metal consumers' tendency to reject interpretations of metal as a sincere contention. However, they also entice to consider that relations to loudness might initially, i.e. during teenage years, be construed as part of a broader political positioning. We voluntarily focused our attention on young adult consumers, who had exited this period of their life. We, therefore, lack the information necessary to provide an in-depth analysis of these teenage dynamics. There is no doubt this subject would deserve a complete, independent investigation.

Nevertheless, this last point forcefully manifests the overarching ambiguity we will attempt to resolve in the remainder of this chapter. The quick, and apparently earnest, discursive defusal of anti-establishment performances within the metal community casts doubt upon their political significance. From metalheads' perspective, these performances seem to have no political value; and loudness, like the rest of these provocations, would therefore be an empty and harmless contestation. And yet, our field observations as well as our previous discussion of loudness' epistemic, self-transformative, aesthetic, and spiritual value indicate that the consumption of loudness does transgress, or subvert, dominant norms in several domains. Working towards the resolution of this apparent contradiction, our next section

will consider whether and how loudness participates in the negotiation, enforcement, and maintenance of specific value systems within the metal community. Specifically, we will argue that loudness consumption does participate in the political diversification of the genre, while simultaneously preserving a relative homogeneity of core values. Focusing on this community level will help to highlight the political potential of loudness in a clear fashion, before we consider more subtle manifestations of this potential beyond the community.

II. Loudness politics within the community: Diversification and homogeneity

A. Political and aesthetic reconfigurations of the genre: The case of black metal

The history of metal is the history of its fragmentation. Since its emergence in the 1970s England, the genre has developed in a profusion of subgenres with distinct identities and sounds (Christie 2003). Many of these subgenres have emerged in opposition to some parts of the broader metal culture or in reaction to specific sub-streams' aesthetics. In this section, we propose to illustrate the intertwinement of the aesthetic and the political in the emergence of one of these sub-genres: black metal. This brief historical perspective is meant to highlight that, despite metalheads' discourses, loudness is indeed an agent of political transformation, that it can and does participate in the transformation and negotiation of value systems, at least within the community.

Black metal emerged, in the early 1990s, partly in reaction to more demonstrative styles such as thrash and hair metal (Kahn-Harris 2007, pp2-5). It constituted a profound aesthetic rupture from the more commercial genres of the time. Its sound broke with the heaviness which had characterized metal thus far. Resorting to basic recording and production technologies,[125] as well as alternative singing, playing, and composition techniques, black metal musicians gave their music a cold, dark, sinister, and high pitch tone (Christie2003, p269-289; cf. *A Blaze in the Northern Sky* by Darkthrone

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125 Sometimes for lack of money, and others as an artistic choice.

[1992]). This new aesthetics clashed significantly with the warmer, thicker, and heavier tone of productions enjoying popular success at the time (e.g. *Sad but True* by Metallica [1993]). Black metal bands did not play louder than other metal acts. However, they rearranged the expression and experience of loudness, notably by featuring prominently shrieking and very fast sounds (e.g. screamed vocals, tremolo picking)[126] as well as suppressing soli, depriving the consumer from any escape by creating a sustained wall of overwhelming sound (Kahn-Harris 2007, p34; Walser 1993, p53). In this movement, loudness stops being a heavy and empowering sensation (Walser 1993, pp44-45), to become a chilling, pervasive, and demanding intrusion, calling for cold appreciation and self-control rather than chaotic outbursts and Dionysian dances.

These sonic transformations integrated in a broader reconfiguration of the music performance and consumption, including alternative visual aesthetics, lyrical themes, concert practices (on-stage and off-stage), and corporeal management. Taken together, these transformations came to manifest an increased valorization of control over let-go. It is, for example, in the black metal scene that emerged ascetic practices. Contrasting with the alcoholic or sexual excesses celebrated in the 1980s, especially in glam or hair metal (e.g. *Dr. Feelgood* by Mötley Crüe), the black metal scene came to valorize drug consumption as a threat to the control one ought to have over her or himself. The scenic performances of black metal musicians constitute another example of this increased valorization of control. While thrash, hair, or death metal had been characterized by energetic and overly expressive scenic performances, involving jumps, headbang, or lascivious dances, black metal musicians adopted static stances, staying mostly still, their faced closed, as they implacably poured their cold sound over an audience which received it impassively. Moshing became, in some circles a distasteful and frowned upon practice, manifesting a form of youthful exuberance clashing with black metal valorization of stoic impassibility and self-control. Our observation sessions in black metal concerts tend to indicate that such stances still dominate the subgenre although we witnessed some deviations from this rigid script. Tying

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[126] Tremolo picking is a form of high-speed alternate picking.

contestation at the community's and broader social level, the aesthetic opacity of the subgenre developed along with a deep culture of elitism and misanthropy, notably expressed through homophobic and racist discourses (Kahn-Harris 2007, p40). Although black metal's audience has greatly extended since the early 1990s, some bands even achieving commercial success,[127] the black metal scene initially dwelled in its underground origin, cultivating a sense of marginality which took a spectacular turn between 1992 and 1994 as members from the scene engaged in a series of murder and arsons. Although these dramatic misbehaviors have been traced back to individual circumstances, as well as issues with respect to the Norwegian social model (Moynihan and Søderlind 2003 [1998]), they nonetheless durably marked the genre identity.

The emergence of black metal was thus marked by the conjoint reconfiguration of its sound and broader performance, including its consumption and production. Taken together, these reconfigurations proposed a new articulation of the genre value system characterized by the hypertrophy of control at the cost of let-go. According to our definition, these discursive, practical, and aesthetic reconfigurations were therefore simultaneously political. They proposed and achieved a different articulation of the genre value system. It is worthwhile dwelling upon the role of sound in the process. Our semiotic perspective, and its generative property, might lead to consider that the first black metal enthusiasts used loudness and sound to express or manifest their dissatisfaction with the broader genre dominant value system. However, we should note that the aesthetic reconfiguration at play did not only manifest a political reconfiguration, but also enforced it to a large extent. The black metal sound, its production and consumption, required and nurtured this valorization of control. Flirting with abject noise, the pervasive, cold, and muddled live sound of black metal required discipline to be enjoyed. It required the listener to overcome the music abrasion and focus attentively to grasp the nuances of the music. Simultaneously, crafting this loudness into a

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[127] Manifesting this acceptance by the mainstream, Craddle of Filth, a British black metal band was nominated, in 2004, for a Grammy award, a prestigious American music award (http://www.blabbermouth.net/news/metallica-cradle-of-filth-mot-rhead-among-grammy-nominees/), for *Godspeed on the Devil's Thunder*, an album which made it in the US top 50 (http://www.billboard.com/artist/299715/cradle-filth/chart).

coherent musical piece demanded from musicians' dedication and a tight control over their playing not to verse into unstructured noise. This brief discussion, which we will pursue and extend in our next section, indicates that the aesthetic is not a refraction of the political as much as a political force itself. The aesthetic opacity of the genre contributed to mark the subgenre difference and enforce its separation from more commercial styles which offered easier access and more positive feelings of empowerment and ecstasy.

This introduction to black metal illustrates the intertwinement of sub-genres' sonic and political experimentations. Metal's history is teemed with such reconfigurations mixing the political and the aesthetic. Loudness, its production, performance, and experience, appear to constitute political stakes and forces, insofar as they contribute to manifest and enforce specific value systems. These reconfigurations rarely result in the disappearance of older sub-genres. As part of our ethnography, we participated in concerts from sub-genres which had emerged at the end of the 1970s. These musical styles, their specific value system, and orchestration of loudness live on and coexist with newer musical forms. As a result, the metal landscape is characterized by a state of permanent agon, which does not prevent the peaceful gathering of metalheads during major festivals or the presentation of a united front when it faces attacks, a point we will further develop later on (cf. III. Loudness politics beyond the community). The agon resides in the fact that some sub-streams' aesthetics and value systems are defined, among other things, through the confrontation of other sub-streams.

B. Sonic discipline: Keeping the genre together through loudness

We have focused, so far, on the agonistic value of loudness. We discussed how the consumption and production of extreme sound levels participates, at the sub-cultural level, in contrasting established value systems. We now propose to study how extreme sound levels participate in the enforcement and maintenance of the values shared within the community.[128] Our developments

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[128] In the following pages, we will take a specific interest in the ways loudness enforces these different values. The notion of "enforcement," we argue, appropriately expresses the intertwinement of let-go and control at the political level. Successfully enforcing a value system implies that an exertion of control is met by an act of submission. "Enforcement" can

suggest that there is no absolute consensus over metal and loudness' aesthetic, spiritual, or epistemic value. We nonetheless identified some regularity in metalheads' valorizations of the loudness experience, regardless of the subgenre considered: an openness to the other, a willing confrontation of violence, and a desire to negotiate and experience the climactic intertwinement of control and let-go, life and death, the limit and its transgression (cf. chapters III, IV, V).[129] Loudness takes a prominent role in enforcing these values within the concert house, while protecting this space from unwanted intrusions, in a literal and figurative sense.

Echoing Foucault's disciplinary control (Foucault 1975), as well as Vigarello's mechanisms of corporeal and moral rectitude (Vigarello 1978), loudness political control is enforced through the flesh. It binds the symbolic and the somatic to protect the metal space, driving away potential intruders who might disrespect the manifest and untold rules governing the concert activity. Loudness' influence, however, is hidden. Much like the corporeal control enforced through disciplinary institutions, the normative power of sound is subtle and frequently takes the face of obviousness. The metalheads who perform and undergo its control never seem entirely aware about it. Upon further inspection, however, it manifests itself quite clearly through the barriers it creates to protect the concert space.

The first barrier it constitutes is aesthetic. Appreciating metal's loudness is a demanding exercise requiring an education and continuous engagement with the genre (cf. A. Learning metal aesthetics). For an outsider, live metal music is likely to flirt with abject noise and can potentially turn into a tiresome experience. It was the case for Anne-Laure, one of our external

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therefore be understood as the complex term of the let-go—control contrariety. Studying how loudness enforces a value system is, therefore, considering both terms of the opposition and the way they meet in the exertion of power.

[129] Black metal, which we discussed previously, is the subgenre which appears to depart the most from these common characteristics. We indeed noted that it was characterized by a hypertrophy of control at the cost of let-go, which resonates more with consumer health psychology's discourse than the picture we painted of metal, so far. However, while the subgenre manifests an increased valorization of control compared to other metal streams, transgression stays at the heart of its identity. Be it aesthetic, somatic, or discursive, these transgressions simultaneously violate and recognize the limit they are transgressing. As such, although it does valorize control and domination highly, black metal does acknowledge a desire for violence and disorder.

observers who participated in a concert by post-black metal act Neurosis (May 25th 2013). Upon exiting the concert house, she noted she got exhausted trying to understand the musical performance she had listened to and observed. For unaccustomed audience, confronting loudness' aesthetics is likely to be both cognitively puzzling and physically taxing. As such, it contributes to define and protect the metal space. Furthermore, we should remind that, for metalheads, loudness within the concert house manifests the different facets of power which are central to the genre identity (cf. I. Loudness' musicality: Power, clarity, quintessentiality). Altogether, extreme sound levels conjointly define the normal value system within the concert house (i.e. a reverence for power and its different forms) and guarantee the application of this norm through mechanisms of sonic control. In doing so, it sonically guarantees that only motivated and committed listeners, sharing a common understanding of the metal culture, will inhabit the concert space.

The spiritual experience of loudness, the loss of self and transgression it implies, might further discourage outsiders from entering the community and its ritual space. We noted that metalheads' spiritual relation to loudness, resting upon the transgression of inviolable boundaries, constitutes an extraordinary experience (cf. IV. Conclusion). As such, it requires consumers to learn to engage sound and interpret the sensations it creates in a specific way. This learning process can be facilitated by the community, through mentorship, for example. It, nonetheless, requires aspiring metalheads to reconfigure their position as to what constitute desirable relations to the body. Breaking with dominant, and notably medical, conceptions of the body, enjoying the spiritual dimension of the concert experience implies opening up to the violence of sound, to death, and infinity. This reconfiguration is not self-evident. In line with our theoretical developments, it is also morally condemnable. Loudness' sonic transgression contrasts with the mainstream valorization of control, civilization, and individuality (cf. III. The cult of control). Metalheads are ultimately able to reconcile, or rather isolate, mainstream and sub-cultural value systems as they quickly defuse the significance of such anti-social displays (cf. I. Defused contestation: Political relations to the other). However, such defusal requires an understanding, even implicit, of the metal culture and its

operation, which newcomers to the genre will most likely lack. In sum, the spiritual value of loudness concurrently motivates metalheads' exposure to extreme sound levels and has potential to be a powerful leverage of control protecting the community. As argued from the aesthetic perspective, loudness simultaneously guarantees the enforcement of the norm and manifests its content.

Note that the way loudness binds the somatic and the symbolic in enforcing metal values is fully coherent with the coexistence of earnest discourses of normality and spectacular performances of anti-sociality. As argued in our theoretical section, the embodiment of social rules, for example operated through disciplinary institutions, frequently makes these rules seemingly natural. Incarnated norms go unquestioned and, to a large extent, unquestionable. The normative violence of extreme sound levels is, therefore, likely to be invisible to the metalheads it has shaped over extended periods of time. This inconspicuousness would contribute to explain metal consumers' seemingly honest discourse of openness. Their implicit character, however, does not diminish the actual power of these norms, which we discussed in our previous paragraphs. Loudness, therefore, appears to feature prominently among the multiple "unspoken and subtle" practices of exclusion explaining the community's relative homogeneity (Kahn-Harris 2007, p73). It does not only signify a difference but also enforces and protects a set of values defining the community.

III. Loudness politics beyond the community

Our study of loudness political value within the community indicates that, despite most metalheads' discourses, extreme sound levels do participate in processes of political identification and control. So far, however, our investigation confines this control at the community's level. It does not indicate whether metal's loudness has potential for influencing dominant value systems; notably with respect to health, self-destruction, and the body. Inversely, we have yet to discuss more directly whether and how the dominant political treatment of loudness affects the community's own value system. This chapter's developments might convey the impression that the metal

community operates in isolation from any external influence. In an attempt to address these pending issues, we will now work towards the resolution of the following question: how politically permeable is the metal community and culture? Concluding our theoretical section, we mentioned that our own critique of consumer health psychology should not silence the voices of metal consumers, lest we suffocate what should be a lively and ongoing discussion between metalheads, academics, and other political actors. Studying the outward and inward permeability of the metal community will help to assess whether such a discussion already exists and allow identifying its current form and content.

A. Inward permeability

Our previous discussions have highlighted quite directly the community's inward permeability. Despite self-stigmatizing discourses and diverse manifestations of marginality and anti-sociality, some metalheads have clearly integrated dominant values, notably in their relation to extreme sound levels. The adoption of hearing protections, as a way to preserve the biological body, is the most blatant example of this receptivity. Although this specific valorization of the body, sound, and self-destruction might not dominate the metal culture, even more so during concerts, it, nonetheless, appears to garner metalheads' attention and guide some of their behaviors (cf. III. Conclusion).

Furthermore, the strong valorization of individual power within the community echoes the valorization of individuation characterizing the civilizing process (cf. 1. Compartmentalization in consumer health psychology). Regardless of the area considered (i.e. epistemic, aesthetic, or spiritual), we have noted how consumers crafted their experience of loudness through personal "ways of the body," including the use of hearing protections, of their own voice, of drugs, or their placements in the room. Performed through the subjective body, the ways through which consumers experience their social lives are inherently personal. However, they are also informed and regulated, to varying extent, by cultural norms. Our discussion of loudness' aesthetic appreciation emphasized the learning process which leads metalheads to recognize and appreciate the sensation of loudness (cf. A. Learning metal

aesthetics). Similarly, the spiritual enjoyment of extreme sound levels is enabled and constrained by collective practices and sub-cultural codes which guide and frame their transgressive experience (cf. III. Spiritual alea: The collective achievement of the sacred).

And yet, metalheads' discourses insistently emphasized the individual character of their and others' relations to sound, of their origins and ends. They noted the freedom anyone had to consume loudness in specific ways, celebrating a form of absolute individual sovereignty when it comes to metal music's appreciation. Additionally, some metalheads' positions towards live metal music, as something to be crafted, shaped, or co-performed, breaks with representations of consumers as passive receivers of the sound (cf. I. Loudness' musicality: Power, clarity, quintessentiality). Several concert-goers acknowledged their ability, and sometimes their responsibility in correcting or refining, through hearing protections, for example, the ways they experience extreme sound levels. Despite their collective performance, the concert and the loudness experience should, therefore, yield to the individual power.

In some cases, metalheads even appear to push dominant positions to extremes. Alex's discussion of concerts as an experience of self-improvement is indicative to this extent:

> Alex: Well, plugs for me are just that. Here, I precisely remind this maturity. And it is being able to distinguish what is happening and emerge more mature from this experience. Having learnt something and not letting it be useless. Else, you could as well stay home. As silly as it may sound, it ought to make you progress. Every element ought to make you grow.
>
> Max: Earplugs allow you to go in this…
>
> Alex: For me, you get something higher. It allows us…let's say it increases our abilities. Given that the music always looks to further the limits of the human, in its making, in its production, in its post-production, and in its listening, we also ought to push further our ability to listen.

According to Alex, the concert needs to be an elevating experience, else it is useless. Growth and self-improvement are core components of his motivation to attend musical performances. It even justifies a form of transhumanism. In this respect, his discourse echoes Ehrenberg's theory of performance (Ehrenberg 1991, pp171-195). It manifests how the logic of performance can be found even in recreational activities often depicted as purely destructive and vain. Hearing protections, here, replace Ehrenberg's drugs to facilitate the transcendence of human abilities. We should note, however, that the anxiety described by Ehrenberg did not taint Alex's relation to performance.[130] This relation rather appeared playful and unfazed, providing a motive for self-esteem. As such, it invites to reconsider a purely dystopian reading of consumer psychology's project, a task we will undertake in this chapter's conclusion and pursue in this dissertation's final discussion.

B. Outward permeability

Assessing the outward permeability of the community is slightly more complex. The embodied character of loudness normative power challenges the permanence of its effects outside the community. The efficiency of the Foucauldian discipline lies, to a large extent, in the permanence of the control it imposes on bodies, from the school to the army, the army to the factory, and potentially from the factory to the prison or asylum. The corporeal clout of loudness, on the other hand, seems to subside with the concert night. The tight sonic control it imposes, and the values it manifests and embodies, appear to dissolve as soon as the concert powerful loudspeakers become quiet. One of our external observers noted how the crowd, which seemed to have shared so much during the concert, quickly scattered after the performance, as if nothing had happened (June 3rd, 2009). Beyond the concert house, the political manifestations of metal's loudness are, therefore, likely to be subtle. This issue is all the more delicate to investigate that our study focused on sound consumption among metalheads and within the concert house. Although we did meet and talk with metal consumers in different contexts, evaluating the full effect of loudness consumption on everyday consumption practices and

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[130] Alex appeared to us, and presented himself, as a highly anxious individual otherwise. However, his relation to the music, as he described it and as we observed it during concerts, did not appear to be distressing.

values would require a more thorough investigation of metalheads' lifestyles outside the concert space. Nonetheless, we believe our fieldwork and discussions indicate that, ultimately, loudness is not a void transformation or contestation even if is influence is subtle.

First of all, metal's loudness does not entirely disappear when the concert ends. It lingers. It stays with metalheads under different forms. Its most obvious manifestation outside the concert house is the tinnitus, which can remind metal consumers of extreme sounds' violence, sometimes years after the performance which caused them. They persist as scars, biological and experiential evidence of the sacrifice. For some consumers, this experience of the corporeal limit contributes to the redefinition of relations to self-destruction, health, and the body (cf. III. Conclusion). As such, its experience and meaning are not restricted to the concert but overflow it. Loudness does not only persist as a sign of weakness, however, but also as a memory of empowerment, transgression, and solidarity. Although the respondents we interviewed had difficulties to verbalize and elaborate on the sensations they had experienced, they all had a deep and intimate knowledge of loudness and its meaning; as illustrated by the rich and diverse metaphors they proposed during our interviews.

These developments tend to support that the consumption of loudness has consequences for metalheads' value systems beyond the ephemeral concert experience. They do not indicate, however, whether the sonic contestation orchestrated during concerts has any implication for the definition and operation of society as a whole. Again, we suggest that such implications can be hypothesized, although the contestation involved is certainly far from the concert brutal and uncompromising spectacle.

We should first note that on the rare occasions where metal music surfaces in the public debate, it is either to be ridiculed, or as a subject of deep concern. In 2010, Charles Henri-Jamin, a member of the French Christian Democrat party (PCD), a rightist conservative formation, voiced publicly his disapproval of the Hellfest, a French metal festival now in its 8th edition. He noted that the "culture of death" celebrated during this festival might

"negatively influence a psychologically fragile youth up to the point of committing serious and violent acts" (lepcd.fr).[131] As a result, Christine Boutin, the leader of the PCD, called various sponsors to cancel their support to the event (rue89.nouvelobs.com).[132] The community and metal culture was defended by Patrick Roy, a French socialist deputy, who voiced his support to the music festival, in the name of cultural diversity, during a much agitated parliamentary session (www.youtube.com).[133] The PCD's request went unanswered and Christine Boutin became a laughing stock in the metal community and beyond. This brief outburst of the metal culture in French politics indicates that metal has potential for disturbing the most conservative and religious fringe of the political spectrum, which interpret the genre's symbolic imaginary at face value.[134] This *prima facie* interpretation of the culture, as something dangerous, brutal, violent, and threatening for civilization, is sometimes spread through mainstream media, causing outrage among metalheads (www.television.telerama.fr),[135] and what we can only imagine to be puzzled or concerned reactions from viewers unfamiliar with the genre and broader youth culture. The tremendous loudness of the genre often features prominently in these documentaries, fueling the fear of, and overall discontent with, the subculture (www.vimeo.com, 3:34)[136]

Such treatments of the metal culture forcefully remind the phobic processes described by Duclos in American media's treatment of serial killers (Duclos 2004). They leverage a rhetoric of fear, violence, and death, appealing to viewers' disgust, while offering them the opportunity to enjoy these values on a phobic mode. From this perspective, the metal culture is the scarecrow contributing to preserve a society which places civilizing control above everything else, but refuses to forego the chaotic ecstasy it condemns so

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[131] http://lepcd.fr/festival-de-metal-hellfest-a-clisson-promouvoir-hellfest-avec-de-largent-public-cest-insoutenable/

[132] http://rue89.nouvelobs.com/rue69/2010/03/22/boutin-sen-prend-a-un-festival-de-metal-et-sa-culture-de-la-mort-143723

[133] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UENvu1d9q9U

[134] The metal music had caused similar concern in the United-States in the 1980s when the conservative Parents Music Resource Center, founded by Tipper Gore, publicly denounced what they saw as the deleterious violence and transgression of heavy metal and other musical styles such as hip-hop (Christie 2003, pp117-125).

[135] http://television.telerama.fr/television/hellfest-les-fans-de-metal-remontes-contre-m6,100611.php

[136] http://vimeo.com/71013580

harshly. In the process, these documentaries do not only reinforce the value system they thrive on, but also undermine metal's subversive power. As should be clear from our previous developments, this subversive potential does not lie in the savage unleashing of violence as much as in the reconciliation of the limit and its transgression as well as alternative relations to health and the body. For who is willing to observe the community's up close, metal concerts manifest the intimate intertwinement of civilization and animality, of control and let-go, of the limit and its transgression. This transgression of, or rather this alternative to, existing value systems fails to surface, however, when metal is reduced to a savage feast. By focusing exclusively on the let-go position and its associated terms (e.g. animality, death, destruction), it misses, or rather voluntarily overlooks, the creative and transformative potential of loudness consumption.

Some media prefer to defuse metal's violence, presenting metal festivals as easy-going and immature carnivals. These reports often highlight and dramatize the apparent gap existing between the music and culture's apparent violence, on one hand, and metalheads' kindness, on the other. Received with mixed feelings by metalheads (www.vs-webzine.com),[137] these reports do not fit Duclos' argument. They, nonetheless, undermine the transgressive power of metal and loudness. These reports suppress a different term of the equation. By focusing on the folkloric and fun, not to say grotesque, dimension of the metal culture, it empties the sound's violence from its subversive potential. Incidentally, the sonic dimension of the concert is often overlooked in these representations, despite its contribution to the music violence, to favor a more telegenic visual spectacle.

This review paints an underwhelming picture of metal's influence in the broader society. Its symbolic and somatic potential seem to be lost outside the concert house. We should not be too hasty, however, in concluding to the complete inefficiency of loudness' political contestation, for several reasons. As argued previously, at metalheads' individual level, the transformative potential of loudness consumption is not bound by the concert doors. Extreme

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[137] http://www.vs-webzine.com/InfoVS-Le+HELLFEST++au+Petit+Journal.Le+Petit+Journal+de+Cana-63753.html

sound levels stay with metal consumers in different forms. As fully integrated members of society, metalheads, therefore, have the opportunity, often at a local and modest scale, to influence and shape the value systems they evolve in, at work or at school, for instance. Nico, for example, explained that he had introduced headbanging as a physical education practice in elementary school. He presented it as a playful way to warm up the cervical area. In doing so, however, he also nurtured a sense of vertigo among children, reminiscent of the loss of self fundamental to the metal performance. According to him, the experience pleased the kids under his responsibility, but failed to earn the education authority's approval. The family is a place where loudness and metal consumption can have more direct and powerful effects. During our fieldwork, two of our acquaintances in the metal sub-culture gave birth to children and exposed them to the metal culture from an early age, notably through prenatal music listening sessions. This early exposure, as well as these parents' stated willingness to make metal part of their children's culture, indicates that the metal value system will undoubtedly constitute a cornerstone in the primary socialization of these children, who will grow to be active members of society.

We should, finally, note that the growing corpus of academic research and "non-phobic" journalism on the subject contributes to introduce a broader audience to the genre values and consumption practices.[138] In these pages, we have referred to several ethnographies which brought metal in the academic debate (Berger 1999; Kahn-Harris 2007; Walser 1993; Weinstein 1991 [2000]). Approaching the community from a variety of theoretical angles and traditions (e.g. new musicology, phenomenology, practice theory), these studies have contributed to cast light on the complexities of metalheads' discourses and practices. In most cases, this work was accomplished with some critical distance from the culture. Walser (1993), Berger (1999), and Kahn-Harris (2007) have developed more critical positions, pointing out the contradictions, violence, and potential dangers of metal's collective identity and performance (see for example Berger 1999, pp289-294). Combining this

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[138] We use the term "non-phobic" to differentiate superficial journalistic treatments focused on disgust and fear, from alternative types of treatment. It is, therefore, a broad category which can include in-depth studies and critiques, but also apologies, mockumentaries, video diaries, and other types of approaches to the genre.

critical position with rigorous efforts to understand the community from etic and emic perspectives, these authors have greatly participated in legitimizing metal as a relevant cultural and experiential form. While such ethnographies primarily appealed to academics, video-documentaries, presenting the culture as a whole or some of its aspects, have potential to appeal to a broader audience. Documentaries such as *Metal: A Headbanger's Journey* (Dunn and McFadyen 2005) or *Anvil! The Story of Anvil* (Gervasi 2008) have already worked in this direction with modest critical and box-office success.

IV. Conclusion

The performance of loudness in the metal community is, therefore, political. It is not activist and often not even reflexive. It, nonetheless, plays a significant role in contesting, enforcing, and maintaining value systems at the community's and broader social level. Loudness' political value is the most obvious within the community as it contributes to manifest the values shared by metalheads, while participating in the reconfiguration and fragmentation of the genre. It simultaneously manifests the community's shared identity and offers a rich resource to propose sub-genre specific articulations of this very identity. Its influence beyond the community, and especially beyond the concert ephemeral experience, is more subtle. It is, nonetheless, discernable and could bear significant implications for our broader social life. Next, we suggest how these findings could lead to reconsider the content and practice of public health policies and the theories which underpin them.

A. Public health policies as political projects

This chapter's developments entice to re-evaluate the power and responsibility of public health institutions. Even in a sub-culture which celebrates anti-establishment and violence, these policies are effective, beyond expectations even. In line with the rich literature on health policies and the body we reviewed in our theoretical section, public health communications do not only affect consumption practices, but also the way consumers valorize their consumption experiences. Public institutions educative power is, therefore, not limited to the adoption of proper behavior. It encompasses and combines proper "doing," "being," and "thinking".

The cultural permeability of the metal community does not prevent institutional resistances to dominant health discourses, however. Its collective identity partly rests upon an opposition to mainstream standards, even if, at an individual level, consumers hold much more subtle positions. As such, any intrusion of these standards is likely to be construed as an aggression, undermining their efficiency. Public policy-makers should understand that metalheads' identity, and positions towards self-protection, are fleeting. As such, answers to communications and other educational efforts are likely to differ depending on the role assumed by the consumer. Any public action reinforcing the contrast between metal and dominant discourses is bound to have mixed effects, forcing the consumer to juggle between individual beliefs and community duties. Practically, these developments underscore that a rhetoric leveraging individual power and choice could be efficient, but only if it does not jeopardize the strong sense of solidarity and unity which underlies the community's identity. To that extent, working from *within* the community is likely to bear more significant impact than simply trying to impose proper behaviors from the outside. We already proposed ways to work in such directions and will collect our different insights in our final discussion (cf. Chapter V: Loudness aesthetics).

From a broader perspective, the political efficiency of public health actions entices us to renew our call to policy-makers to engage in more reflexive working processes. Public actors are free to keep concentrating on the symptomatic, to tighten their focus around behavioral outcomes (i.e. the adoption of hearing protections). We would, however, recommend not doing so. Refusing to acknowledge the political implications of public actions will not prevent them. This willful ignorance risks hiding the adverse effects, as well as the far-reaching implications, of the policies currently enforced. We already noted how an exclusive focus on individual responsibility, choice, and power can ultimately lead to feelings of alienation and increased resistances to public communications (cf. A. From agon to damage control). By acknowledging the value structures and processes underlying their actions, policy-makers would be better able to identify such adverse effects.

Such acknowledgment would also help policy-makers to understand the resistances they meet in their altruistic effort to engage consumers. This political perspective indicates quite clearly that more is at stake in loudness consumption and self-protection than hearing abilities. What is at stake in the promotion, adoption, and resistance to hearing protection is not the confrontation of good and bad practices, but the interaction of two conceptions of society and life, inscribed in and performed through the body. As such, more reflexive practices would not only lead to identify underlying issues with current policies and theories, but could also result in rejuvenated and more ambitious social projects, based on coherent actions across public health areas (e.g. road safety, sexuality, vaccination…). Placing reflexivity and transparency at the heart of health-related policy-making is a vast and long-run project, which should mobilize a large range of specialists, including sociologists, semioticians, political scientists, management and marketing scholars, as well public actors and consumers. Such effort would most likely imply a profound reconfiguration of power positions within the health field, which could greatly hinder its implementation. However, such an effort would also offer an exit from the fatalistic picture painted by the Foucaldian critique and is, therefore, worth considering.

B. Loudness politics: Contestation and transformation

Our reflections, so far, have emphasized how public policy-makers can increase the breadth and depth of their impact by reconsidering the political dimension of their action and relation to the consumers they attempt to protect. Our findings, however, are not a simple guide to transform or penetrate the metal community. They also invite to consider how the metal community might challenge, influence, and transform mainstream society. It invites policy-makers not only to define their ongoing axiological project, but also to transform it.

Our findings underscore that consumer health psychology's discourse, and the policies it underlies, are not obvious. The way they frame the body, self-preservation, and self-destruction are not matter of fact. The metal community offers an alternative type of relationship to the body which is

socially, spiritually, and epistemically motivated. Crucially, this alternative valorization of the body, which welcomes and seeks loss of control, is compatible with the preservation of health. It challenges the catastrophic rhetoric that presents systematic civilizing control as the only guarantee of social and individual peace. In doing so, it shakes the "natural" authority of consumer health psychology and opens a door to alternative value systems. The metal community and culture do not provide the blueprint for an ideal society. It is not a utopia, waiting to be applied to a larger scale. Many citizens would certainly not be satisfied with the articulation of values it proposes, even if this articulation is exposed in a clear fashion. Our participant observation revealed that the metal community stays a predominantly white, male, and heterosexual phenomenon, and its values are likely to reflect this socio-demographic composition. What the metal community offers, for who is willing to listen, is a different voice that can contribute to the social debate; a voice which might offer an alternative to the currently enforced project and its dystopian interpretation.

Introducing this chapter, we argued that identifying the political claims underlying loudness consumption would offer opportunities to work on the deeper roots of self-destructive behaviors. We understand we left this issue pending. Our developments suggest that identifying any overt, general, and actionable claim is utterly complex. This complexity notably stems from metalheads' tendency to juggle anti-social discourses and a certain willingness to, and sometimes even a pride in, respecting the very social norms the genre seems to criticize. Furthermore, even upon discussing political issues on a more personal basis, metalheads exhibit a diversity of political opinions that prevents from drawing any definite conclusion regarding the genre positioning, at least with respect to a traditional left-right political spectrum. These findings, however, should not discourage policy-makers from acknowledging the political significance of loudness production and consumption. They rather entice to look for this potential in a different place, namely in its incarnated experience. This chapter does not identify new claims, but emphasizes the political nature of the valorization processes defined in our previous chapters (cf. chapters III, IV, V). What is at stake in loudness consumption is not only

an individual experience, but also an understanding of the world which is shared within the community, with more consistence than traditional political ideas. Wrapping up our different chapters, and extending their individual conclusions, our final discussion will offer an interpretation of this political project and the way it could influence the practice and research of public health policies.

Chapter VIII: Discussion

Suggested listening:

- Machine Head – Davidian [Live] (1994)
- Arch Enemy – Nemesis [Live] (2005)

We opened this dissertation with a simple question: "How can we explain that some consumers expose themselves to deafening sound level during concerts, despite policy-makers' efforts to communicate on the dangers associated with such practices?" Our thesis was that current policies' relative inefficiency stemmed from an insufficient understanding of what loudness consumption is, of its value, and importance for consumers.

To address this issue, we first turned to consumer health psychology, a prominent and active research stream which has consistently worked to curb self-destructive consumption practices since the early 1990s (Hoch and Lowenstein 1991, Loewenstein 1996). We proposed a critique of this largely dominant approach to health issues in order to (1) identify existing policies' and theories' shortcomings and (2) foster a richer debate between the different stakeholders involved in hearing health issues (i.e. consumers, scholars, public policy-makers). After voicing several concerns regarding consumer psychology's project, we proposed to contrast the research stream's symbolic imaginary and recommendations with consumers' own discourses and practices with related to health, loudness, and self-destruction. To do so, we developed a methodology, rooted in semiotics, aimed at capturing and unfolding the elusive meaning of loudness within the metal community. Our study yielded multiple insights for marketing theory and practice, articulated around five values, which we summarized in table7.[139] These findings offer different ways to rejuvenate the public health research and policies and curb noise-induced hearing loss in recreational activities.

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[139] Note that the implications for current research we list in this table are specifically oriented towards consumer health psychology, but might benefit other research streams. Also note thatwe regroup epistemic and self-transformative valorizations which we defined in the same chapter.

Table 7 – Key findings and implications for theory and practice

	Key findings	Implications for current research	Examples of public policy application
Epistemic and self-transformative value	1. It is *through* the body that consumers experience, acknowledge, and negotiate the pains and dysfunctions induced by self-destruction.	1. Emphasizes the artificial nature of the body/self dualism which underlies the detachment logic. Urges to work *with* the body rather than *against* it.	1. Invite some prominent listeners from local scenes (e.g. musicians, sound engineers) to try out hearing impairment simulators to anticipate the experience of deafness or tinnitus.
	2. For consumers, self-preservation, if it implies relying on external protections, is not only an act of control, but also an act of submission.	2. An exclusive focus on control is bound to have adverse effects. Entices consumer health psychology to consider that its effect, as an academic discipline, exceeds the sum of its parts (i.e. of individual articles).	
	3. Self-control and self-preservation are dissociated in the consumption of loudness.	3. Creates opportunities for alternative framings and experimentations (e.g. let-go and self-preservation, community and self-preservation).	

Epistemic and self-transformative value **(cont.)**	4. Consumers' relations to health and self-destruction are based on compromises, which are sometimes difficult to reach and require symbolic resources to be negotiated.	4. Challenges the catastrophic rhetoric leveraged by consumer health psychology and invites the research stream to: • Consider working on sub-optimal solutions. • Acknowledge the full extent of its educational role.	4. Communicate on the relevance of sub-optimal protective patterns (e.g. "consider using hearing protections for some concerts") Engage consumers in a dialogue over the meaning and trade-offs of self-destruction.
Aesthetic value	1. Decisions to self-protect always imply aesthetic considerations.	1. Urges to include the rich symbolic and experiential value of self-destructive consumption practices in research agendas (How to leverage? How to respect?).	1. Reinforce the positive aesthetic connotations and value of hearing protections by working on: • Public health communications' rhetoric. • Product differentiation, especially in the low-end range. • Co-branding. • Bundling. • Communicating on the range of products available.
	2. The valorization of extreme sound levels in the metal community rests upon their ability to manifest power.	2. *Idem*	2. Consider how to communicate power without increasing sound levels by: • Working on concert houses' architectures. • Investing in sound engineers'

Aesthetic value (cont.)			training. • Communicating on the range of products available. More generally, invites to work on the motivations underlying self-destructive consumption practices, rather than on the symptomatic level.
	3. The aesthetic appreciation of loudness rests upon the coexistence, confrontation, and negotiation of two contrary values: let-go and control.	3. Challenges the catastrophic rhetoric of consumer health psychology.	3. Consider working on gradual changes rather than dichotomous choices.
			4. Addressing hearing health issues will requires mobilizing a wide range of actors, including metalheads, public policy-makers, protection manufacturers, sound educators, architects.
Spiritual value	1. The consumption of loudness constitutes an attempt to experience and transcend several oppositions underlying the human experience; life—death, civilized—animal, control—let-go, self—other.	1. In contrast, consumer health psychology can be defined as "militant non-spirituality"	

Spiritual value **(cont.)**	2. Feelings of disconnection with the other motivate consumers' bare listening and resistance to hearing protections.	2. Emphasizes the fundamental issue with consumer health psychology's logic of detachment and explains consumers' resistances to such strategies.	2. Work on more open protective solutions: • Visually (e.g. forms, materials). • Acoustically. • Rhetorically. Work on less intrusive solutions: • Architectures. • Sound systems. • Sound engineers' training.
	3. Some consumers are able to experience a rich spiritual experience of continuity while using hearing protections.	3. Emphasizes that proximity and self-protection are not *de facto* contradictory and create opportunities for alternative framings and experimentations (e.g. reconciling short-term pleasure and long-term well-being).	
Political value	1. Public policies shape consumers' value systems, and not just their health practices.	1. Indirectly supports the political power of consumer health psychology	1. Invites more reflexive approaches to public policies, considering not only the safe practices but also the values promoted in order to: • Avoid adverse effects. • Identify the far-reaching implications of current policies. • Work on more coherent and

Political value			ambitious social projects.
(cont.)			Consider public health policies not only as a matter of urgency but also as a long-term project.
	2. Consumers' valorizations of loudness can float with the roles they assume (i.e. individual metalhead or community member)		2. Work with and/or within the community (e.g. invite metal consumers to join research groups, manifest a genuine interest in the culture).
			Communicating towards individual consumers should not be done at the expense of the community, be it manifested either directly or indirectly.
	3. As part of a broader set of practices and discourses, loudness consumption manifests and enforces a specific conception of society and life.	3. Emphasizes the relativity of consumer health psychology's project.	3. Approach public health policies as a bilateral learning process, through which consumers and policy-makers should learn from each other.

Although we already discussed each of our chapters individually, highlighting their specific theoretical and practical implications, we now propose to discuss our work's implications from a broader perspective. We suggest that a dissertation is ultimately more than the sum its parts. To be coherent, our work will therefore require additional discussions illuminating the blind spots, risks, and trade-offs implied by the solutions and arguments we offered. This broader perspective will, furthermore, provide an opportunity to discuss this dissertation's contribution to the theories and policies engaged in this dissertation. We will first propose to address some pending issues with respect to public health policies and research, which emerged from our reflections. We will notably discuss general recommendations, which are not value specific, but involve the overall philosophy underlying current public health efforts (cf. I. Public health policies and research: Some pending questions). The second section of this final chapter will discuss our work's contributions to sound studies, semiotics, and body culture studies; i.e. the three research streams, beyond public health policies, which informed our study of loudness consumption (cf. II. Theoretical contributions beyond public health). We will finally define the boundary conditions that frame our work, as well as opportunities to transgress them in future research (cf. III. Issues left to be explored and IV. Contextualization).

I. Public health policies and research: Some pending questions

Our objective in this section is to answer several questions, which did not relate to any specific chapter, but are nonetheless crucial to the issue we study in this dissertation. We hope our reader will forgive the prosaic formulation of these questions. We believe, however, they expose quite clearly the grey areas still requiring our attention.

A. What are policy-makers doing right?

"What are public policy-makers doing right?" is the first question we propose to answer. Our work points out several drawbacks with respect to health policies, which might sap their efficiency and even make them detrimental to individual

and social well-being. Before revamping these policies, however, we should clearly highlight their successes in order to preserve existing leverage to improve consumers' welfare. The undeniable success of public health policies, clearly manifested in our discussions with metalheads, is their contribution to consumers' awareness of hearing health issues. The consumers we interviewed were clearly conscious about extreme sound levels detrimental effects on the long-run, and sometimes directly credited public health institutions for such knowledge. They were also familiar with the solutions available, although we previously suggested axes of improvement in this regard. Although this knowledge is imperfect, due to the gap existing between cognitive and somatic understanding of hearing impairments (i.e. between the projected suffering and its actual experience), it nonetheless prepares consumers to recognize and understand the situation they are facing, sometimes resulting in behavioral change. And even if they do not result in behavioral change, these communications empower consumers, giving them the opportunity to take more responsible decisions, including the active and self-reflexive choice of self-destruction.

B. What social project?

We argued, however, that public communications are rarely just informational. They also convey values. They frame the issues they address and suggestions they make, in a specific way. We repeatedly invited policy-makers to embrace more completely their political role in order to craft more ambitious and coherent social projects. We never clearly stated what the content of such project might be, however. The reason we did not is that it is not for us to decide on the values which ought to be promoted at the social level. Such decision, in a democracy, belongs to citizens and should not be the responsibility of a chosen few scholars. As part of our conclusion we can, nonetheless, offer and motivate a perspective and articulation of values with respect to health issues different from the one currently dominating marketing academia. At the very least, such endeavor will make our personal political position clear, and might therefore, cast additional light on this dissertation developments.

We would first suggest mitigating the catastrophic rhetoric that currently characterizes the framing of public health issues. Our theoretical section mentioned the perverse effects of such a formulation (cf. III. The cult of control), and our empirical investigation suggests that it is not even necessary to the preservation of a healthy body. As such, we can only reissue our call to reintroduce the compromise in public health policies. While some issues (e.g. sexually transmitted diseases and infections) actually seem to justify such a catastrophic framing,[140] others do not and might actually be better dealt with through more moderate approaches. More generally, reevaluating moderation, as a principle of our social lives, might also alleviate the performance-related anxiety which undermines communication societies (Ehrenberg1991, 1995). Relatedly, we would advise breaking with the culture of urgency, which we could interpret as the temporal pendant of a catastrophic framing. This culture of urgency presses to take action immediately, for later will be too late. For instance, despite its consistent criticism of consumers' myopia, consumer health psychology systematically fails to consider health issues from a long-term perspective. Their consistent effort to curb self-destructive practices, focusing on the moment of choice to consume or not to consume, risks missing the far-reaching implications of the recommendations advocated. It overlooks the anxiety it can create, for example, as well as the dynamic construction of consumers over time.

Furthermore, our findings invite to consider reevaluating punishment as a principle and tool of social education, in contrast with a purely preventive system. Our study of metalheads indicates that, in some cases, it is the subjective experience of pain which motivates and guides the transformation of behaviors, as well as more mature relations to health, the body, and self-destruction. Advocating punishment in a society which has established individual liberty as a core and inviolable principle might meet strong resistances. However, our discussions suggest that preventive policies, which have potential to subtly and nonetheless firmly shape value systems, do not guarantee freedom. Furthermore, we should

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[140] We will come back to this distinction in our section C. Extension to other public health issues

strongly emphasize that the punitive experience we study here is a very specific one. It is perceived by consumers as being self-inflicted. Most respondents mentioned their responsibility in degrading their hearing, despite occasional tendencies to verse in aleatory valorizations of loudness' destructiveness. It is not experienced as a top-down process where an external authority would repress forbidden behaviors, and is therefore compatible with a celebration of individual freedom. This attribution of responsibility was notably made possible by current preventive communications, which allowed consumers to make sense of their experience. As such, reevaluating punishment does not imply replacing prevention, but rather thinking these two modalities as complementary necessities in the apprehension of health-related behaviors. Finally, any invitation to consider more punitive education systems is inherently dangerous, due to the pain such system is based on; and gathering punitive powers at the state level always raises legitimate concerns about degeneration into coercive and repressive regimes. It should therefore be clear that what we advocate here is not the reinforcement of a coercive regime, as much as the revalorization of pain as a necessary experience under very specific circumstances. Acknowledging the necessity of pain might lead to better frame it and make its experience more constructive for the individual.

C. Should we take action at all?

The Foucaldian framework we relied on also entices to consider a broader and more radical transformation of public health policies. Considering Foucault's reflections, it appears legitimate to ask whether hearing loss is an issue to begin with. Just like madness is strategically defined in opposition to reason as a way to comfort power positions (Foucault 1972 [1964]), hearing loss might be defined and dramatized as a health issue in order to reinforce the communication society which attempts to curb it. Hearing and, more generally, sensory acuteness are fundamental in a society thriving on smooth human interactions. Alternative social models might perfectly accommodate hearing loss; and interrupting hearing health communications might constitute a first step towards a society that would not

value communication and speed so highly, potentially leading to more well-being at the social and individual levels. Such model might take the form of a libertarian society, which Foucault himself appeared attracted to nearing the end of his life (Garo 2011, p151-157).

There are several issues with such a recommendation, beginning with the fact that this alternative social model is utopian. By utopian, we do not argue that it is unachievable, but rather that in the current context, its realization can only be considered a remote possibility. As repeatedly argued, public policies are embedded in a broader socio-cultural context. Stopping communication on hearing impairment issues, or health altogether, would imply disturbing the power structures intertwined with existing educational and academic structures; undoubtedly creating resistances in the process. Furthermore, such a drastic action would not prevent other political, economic, and cultural dynamics from reproducing and maintaining dominant value systems. A *tabula rasa* of public health policies would not imply the coming of a new social order, or disorder for that matter. At best, it could be considered a significant step in that direction. In the meanwhile, however, loudness consumers would most likely grow uneducated and possibly experience increased physical, emotional, and social suffering. Such a drastic decision would require sacrificing entire generations with little guarantee of success. There is, indeed, no insurance whatsoever that such an alternative model would actually increase social and individual well-being. The libertarianism it would imply might create new strains on individuals and society; the very notion of social well-being possibly becoming irrelevant. As such, we believe that departure from the current social model is not to be found in an illusory *tabula rasa*, but rather in actions in touch with the everyday experience and structure of our social life.

D. Financial considerations

The last issue we have left pending involves the economic feasibility of the solutions we offer. We propose several actions which could increase the adoption of hearing protections among concert-goers, and curb hearing loss more generally.

We should consider, however, that policy-makers work with limited budget. Hearing loss does not appear as dramatic as public health issues with potentially deadly outcomes, such as sexually transmitted diseases and infections (e.g. HIV, papillomavirus), overeating (e.g. cancer, diabetes), or smoking (e.g. cancer). It is therefore likely to attract less attention and financial resources, forcing policy-makers dealing with hearing impairment to minimize costs and prioritize their actions.

Fortunately, our findings offer opportunities for policies involving minimal expenses from public institutions. In particular, the solutions we provide, summarized in table 7, involve a variety of stakeholders, which could share the financial burden involved. Consumers, protection and instrument manufacturers might all participate in, and benefit from, the design and adoption of better adapted solutions. Legislation and communication towards educators, in order to better train sound engineers for example, as well as architects might also significantly improve consumers' hearing health, at a lesser cost. These actions would still imply a financial investment. At the very least, public policy-makers should work as relays, disseminating information and facilitating communication between the different stakeholders. Furthermore, such solution might meet political hurdles. In particular, they would not yield directly visible outcomes, unlike a website or billboards for example, potentially casting doubt upon the proper use of public funds. However, our findings and discussions suggest that such an in-depth action would actually bear more significant results than more visible but less powerful actions. Finally, despite these opportunities, policy-makers might still have to consider prioritizing their actions. The broad picture we paint, the multiple leverages we identify, and the underlying socio-cultural and psychological mechanisms we have highlighted, should however help these public actors to allocate resources coherently and efficiently, with a good understanding of the trade-offs implied.

II. Theoretical contributions beyond public health

As argued in our introduction, and illustrated in our developments, our work is located at the crossroads of four research streams: public health policies, sound studies, semiotics, and body culture studies. Our investigation of loudness consumption did not only leverage these different fields, but also provided an opportunity to participate in their development. Our previous section focused on our contribution to public health policies and studies. We now turn to the three remaining corpuses which have underlain this dissertation.

A. Body culture studies

Our study contributes to the heteroclite field of body culture studies in several ways. First, it discusses the role of abstract theories in the definition and, to a lesser degree, in the enforcement of a disciplinary project. Academic literatures are not, in a classical sense, disciplinary institutions. They lack the physicality of the prison, the school, or the asylum, which contributes to incarnate dominant social norms (Foucault 1975). However, our theoretical discussion indicates that the way they symbolically frame the body, and defines its proper shape and management, participate in the reinforcement of the value system it benefits from. The focus of our investigation does not allow evaluating the full extent of its effects. What we emphasize here is a correlation, rather than causation, between the value systems of consumer health psychology, consumers, and society as a whole. A follow-up study might consist in considering more precisely how, and to what extent, the symbolic imaginary of consumer health psychology trickles down consumers, through media, public institutions, and other channels.

Second, our developments offer a discussion and critique of disciplinary processes grounded in empirical observations of consumers' experiences. While Foucault's philosophical archeology offers a powerful definition and exposé of disciplinary issues (Foucault 1975), it tends to overlook the ways individuals and communities handle this normative pressure. It disregards the movement though which this discipline is embraced, negotiated, or resisted. Mitigating a purely

dystopian view of dominant social norms, our study notably suggests that (1) consumers manage to organize and somatically experience alternative value systems, and that (2) compliance with dominant social norms is not necessarily distressing but can also provide motive for pride and self-esteem. Being able to perform in the appreciation of music was, for example, a very positive experience for Alex (cf. A. Inward permeability); and Sylvia enjoyed finding within herself the resources to deal with detrimental sound levels, manifesting simultaneously a valorization of control and individualism (cf. A. From agon to damage control). We do not contend that Ehrenberg (1991) is wrong in arguing that the cult of performance results in rampant anxiety. Alex's as well as other metalheads' discontent and distress with their social lives, could certainly be related to this constant pressure to perform according to very restrictive and unfair standards. However, the enjoyment some consumers take in complying with dominant social norms invites to be cautious while deconstructing these social paradigms. It also can explain the resistances opposed to such deconstructions, even coming from those who suffer these pressures.

Finally, our findings invite to extend in new directions and contexts the study of norms embodiment. The discussion of loudness epistemic, self-transformative, aesthetic, spiritual, and political value suggests that the embodiment of norms is not the privilege of dominant political institutions. Loudness, we argued, does not only expresses the values shared within the community, but also enforces them through the flesh, simultaneously shaping the collective and individual body. This observation invites to further study the interplay of dominant and sub-cultural or counter-cultural disciplines. Communities of consumption also rely on their own incarnated discipline, manifesting and enforcing their collective norms through the flesh. Indirectly, it also highlights that consumers do not passively submit to the state's corporeal clout. The way they manage their body, but also, and maybe even more crucially, the way they shape the experience of their body can be construed as attempts to negotiate, resist, and subverts socially acceptable norms of experience. In sum, our

reflections constitute a compelling invitation to further study the political character of somatic experiences.

B. Semiotics

This dissertation illustrates how semiotics can contribute to the study of sound, and more specifically to the study of loudness, not only considered as a symbolic sign, decoded from an exterior point of view, but also as embodied meaning, lived through the flesh. It contributes to question the porous relation between the sense and the sensitive, between the cognitive apprehension of meaning and its experience.[141] Next, we discuss the contribution, but also the limitations, of semiotics with respect to sound, focusing on its structural and generative properties.

Our structural approach to loudness, notably through projective interviews and semiotic squares, allowed articulating an integral, deep, and apparently blunt sensation into a multi-dimensional experience and meaningful construct, illustrating the diversity of stakes and positions with respect to sound consumption. Breaking with simplistic accounts of consumers' attraction to extreme sound levels, we offered an interpretation of their consumption in epistemic, self-transformative, aesthetic, spiritual, and political terms. This structural approach helped to (1) break down a monolithic and overwhelming sensation into a variety of values, which, in turns, improved our understanding of loudness consumption, and (2) helped to design more efficient solutions to address its most detrimental consequences. In sum, the structural dimension of semiotics was crucial to secure more intelligibility, more relevance, and more contrasts (Floch 1990, pp10-17), the objective Floch attributes to the discipline.

This structural approach's efficiency, however, should not conceal its limitations, which came to light during the fieldwork and writing of this thesis. By no means should these limitations lead to discard semiotics altogether when it

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[141] In French, which allows expressing this idea with less ambiguity, we would write about the relations between "le sens et le sensible."

comes to sound. They rather constitute blind spots to be taken into account for more relevant and rigorous analyses. First, meaning overflows the structural grid we described it through. Although our structural analysis helped to describe loudness' signification in more depth, it also constrained its discussion. If only from a logical standpoint, the relations of contrariety, contradiction, and complementarity forming the semiotic and projective squares only constitute a restricted subset of the logical relations which can relate terms (Hébert 2011). Beyond this logical perspective, our findings invite to consider that meaning might not be, in and of itself, structural. More precisely, this structural property would constitute an option to articulate and "textualize" meaning, rather than its essential characteristic.[142] Our discussions stressed how consumers appeared to experience the meaning of loudness through the flesh, sometimes with little ability to manifest it verbally. This deep and powerful experience did not imply the cognitive interpretation of a system of differences, but rather a subjective and active engagement with loudness, which made immediate sense for the consumers who performed it.

In light of these discussions, we re-issue our invitation to consider two types of signification, at least with respect to loudness: a somatic signification and a semiotic one. What we label "semiotic signification" has been the object of the discipline, so far. It implies the identification of structural systems which constitute meaning. As such, it involves an interpretive and temporal detachment from meaning, which is considered objectively and *a posteriori*. The reading of a text, from a semiotic perspective, implies breaking with the instantaneity reading involves. It is a post-hoc reflection on and deconstruction of a reading experience. It also implies adopting an objective stance necessary to identify the stable systems of signification underlying cultural representations; and assumes the existence of an objective system of values to be discovered. Conversely, what we propose to define as "somatic signification" implies an immediacy and subjectivity which are lost through the semiotic process. It is subjective,

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[142] By "textualization," we do not only mean its translation in linguistic signs, but also in visuals, forms, and any type of manifestation belonging to the discursive plan.

embodied, instantaneous, and integral, experienced rather than constructed. This distinction is both theoretically and practically relevant. Theoretically, it implies that the textual representation of consumption experiences is likely to be incomplete, missing this somatic meaning. This relative failure invites to complement the semiotic approach with methodologies apt to study and represent this somatic signification, methodologies whose principles remain to be researched. It also entices to consider the interdependency of these two types of signification, how they feed and contrast each other. Practically, it urges policy-makers to consider that the dimensions we identify and summarize in table7 are lived, by consumers, as an integral experience. As such, solutions to sonic self-destruction are likely to be more efficient if they rest upon a holistic principle, which would consider the intertwinement of the epistemic, the aesthetic, the spiritual, and the political in the loudness consumption experience.

Challenging the strict definition of meaning as a system of differences also invites to discuss the second property of semiotics, as defined by Floch (1988), i.e. its generative dimension. Semiotics takes a specific interest in the ways meaning is manifested. As such, it offers multiple tools to understand and discuss the pathway through which meaning passes from abstract semio-narrative structures to discursive manifestations. This property proved very useful in this study. Our projective investigation, for example, leverages semiotics' generative dimension as it facilitates respondents' articulation of meaning through a metaphorical intermediary. This generative property, which assumes the existence of a limited number of value structures underlying consumption phenomena, also eased our interpretive work. In particular, it implied that the value system underlying loudness consumption had a high probability of being manifested through alternative discourses and practices around the concert-house. As such, we had the opportunity to interpret loudness consumption using value systems defined *a priori* through the analysis of less elusive visual elements (e.g. dances, musicians' corporeal performances, scenery, bodily management, lyrics, clothing…).

This generative property helped us to develop more detailed, and yet parsimonious, analyses of loudness consumption. It should, however, be clear that this approach to meaning is not without limitations. The first one is that, to be performed, it requires identifying the discursive structures, the text, manifesting underlying semio-narrative structures or value systems. Floch's introduction to *Semiotics, Marketing, and Signs* announces this idea bluntly: "Beyond the text, No salvation" (Floch 2001, p1). Semiotics is a science of text and consequently reads the world as such. This idea is a fundamental assumption of the discipline that makes its application to a broad range of issues, including consumption phenomena, possible. Semiotics therefore requires "textualizing" our social lives. For example, our projective interviews can be understood as an attempt to translate a deep and meaningful somatic experience into a linguistic text. This textualization, however, implies an impoverishment and transformation of this deep somatic meaning. The inadequacy of linguistics to capture and articulate loudness experience's meaning was, for example, manifested by consumers' initial dumbstruck silence and persistent hesitations when we discussed this issue. Although such silence might be attributed to consumers' limited imagination or verbal skills, or our own inexperience as researchers, we should also consider that sound is, to some extent, impervious to discourse. "I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail" observed Maslow (1966, p15). The risk with semiotics is to forget that the textual construction of the world is an assumption, aimed at intelligibility, rather than an essential characteristic of our social lives and experiences.

At this point, our reader might question the consistency of our analysis, considering that we, by turns, present semiotics as enriching and impoverishing meaning. However, we can quickly dismiss this apparent contradiction by highlighting the two perspectives at stake. For the external observer, such as the scholar or manager, semiotics is indeed a way to enrich meaning, to identify more nuances and contrasts about the behaviors considered. For the subject of these sensations, however, a textual representation cannot fully capture the subjective experience of meaning. As such, it constitutes an impoverishment. This

articulation of the semiotic and the somatic is a vast project and this conclusion is only meant to open avenues for future research. It is an invitation to pursue the exploration of sense-making, and notably of the porous boundaries which separate and connect the semiotic and the somatic.

C. Sound studies

Our work, finally, answers sound studies' invitation to consider sound not only as an object of study, but also as an epistemology, as a special kind of knowing and being into the world (Feld 1996, pp96-98). This ethnography of loudness constitutes a form of "deep listening" which drove us to re-think the "nature and significance of our social experience," notably with respect to power, relational experiences, and communities (Bull and Back 2003, p4). More specifically, we approached one dimension of sound's materiality, i.e. loudness, as a micro-epistemology through which both consumers and we, as researchers, could form specific understandings about the world we live in (Labelle 2010). We repeatedly mentioned how consumers came to form specific knowledge about their body, health, and self-destruction by experiencing loudness destructive power. We also discussed how the spiritual, aesthetic, and political experience and meaning of loudness contributed to manifest and perform specific worldviews, breaking with dominant social norms. From our academic perspective, focusing on the sounded experience of the concert, notably by minimizing references to the textual and visual, offered an opportunity to question current public policy-efforts and consumer research. Moreover, we will shortly argue that this sounded approach to self-destruction and consumption can bear original insights for broader theories about health, notably with respect to nutrition, smoking, and drinking issues (cf. C. Extension to other public health issues). We have, finally, stressed the significant insights such an approach can yield for semiotics and body culture studies.

Although these results are promising, and entice to pursue sound studies' agenda, our endeavor also met some significant difficulties, which should be taken into account in future research. First, although we tried not to let the visual and

linguistic drive our interpretations, they still bore heavily on our reflections. Our semiotic squares, for example, were designed not only based on the concert sounds, but also, and sometimes primarily, on visual and verbal elements including *in-situ* observations, readings (e.g. relevant literature, lyrics), interviews, and photographs. Obviously, the semiotic approach thrives on and, to a large degree, requires multi-sensorial inputs, as it helps to build richer systems of signs, allowing more robust and nuanced interpretations. To this end, our investigation also relied on olfactory, interoceptive, proprioceptive, and haptic sensations. Sound studies do not question the relevance of such data. For Bull and Back (2003, p2), sensorial experiences are ineluctably connected; and what these authors advocate is much more a "democracy of senses" (p2) than the replacement of an ocular-centric paradigm by a sonic one. The limitation we point out is, therefore, not the integration of the visual in our analysis, as much as its overwhelming prominence in some cases. Our analysis of sound was often performed through the prism of the visual, which allowed identifying the initial categories driving our subsequent analysis of loudness consumption. Our heavy reliance on visual and linguistic signs notably resulted from the large array of tools existing to capture and manipulate such data (e.g. photography, printing, and audio recording). As such, while this work constitutes a significant step towards more sounded research, it also highlights the lack of dedicated tools when it comes to sound collection and analysis. Working on sound-specific methods of data collection and interpretation, therefore, appears as a crucial challenge to be addressed for sound studies to take its agenda further.

Another limitation of our work is related to the representation of knowledge rather than its apprehension. Although we paid attention to a wide variety of data while conducting our fieldwork, the presentation of our findings through this dissertation is a mostly textual exercise. This constraint is related to the canonical form of most scientific communications in our society (Conquergood 1991). However, the epistemological specificity of sound, and *a fortiori* loudness, is that it constitutes a form of embodied knowledge, as opposed to visual epistemologies aimed at objective, detached, and disembodied

knowledge (Bull and Back 2003, p4-5). As such, while the textual form we resort to is adapted to communicate our results to academic audience, it also impoverishes the meaning of loudness, a point we already mentioned in our discussion of semiotics and sound. As such, working on more sounded research will not only require to reconsider the way we perform fieldwork, but also the modes of representation available and legitimate to communicate knowledge within academia and beyond.

In sum, our effort constitutes a significant step in the direction of more sounded research. However, much effort remains to be done to unpack the full epistemological potential of sound in general, and loudness in particular.

III. Issues left to be explored

This dissertation highlights and articulates the complexity of loudness. Our developments indicate the rich and diverse values it takes for consumers and communities, notably with respect to dominant social norms. Our work, however, implied choices and some dimensions of the loudness experience in the metal community would have deserved more attention. Next, we briefly present three additional themes which would cast further light on the value of loudness for metal consumers and communities: time, space, and gender.

A. Loudnes, time, and space

We regroup, in this section, the notions of time and space because they appear inherently tied in the concert experience. Although they might not be consumed in and of themselves, they strongly contribute to shape consumers' experience of the concert and the community it celebrates. While we did not address these themes directly, some of our developments clearly suggest their relation to loudness. Discussing the spiritual value of loudness, we, for example, noted that extreme sound levels contributed to experience a heightened connection to the other. Conversely, hearing protections created feelings of isolation, seclusion, and confinement, the impression of being behind a wall or within a bubble. Loudness, in sum, appears to expand consumers' aural space, while creating feelings of

proximity among consumers. It embodies a spatial contradiction, which was directly apparent in some of our respondents' narratives.

The relation between sound and time is also manifest in our research. Discussing the political value of loudness, we, for example, argued that the transgression inherent to the concert experience appeared strictly confined to the concert time (cf. B. Outward permeability). As the last performance of the night ends, and loudness subsides, consumers quickly return to their mundane activities. As such, loudness would open a temporal parenthesis within everyday life. Our reflections, however, suggest that this parenthesis might be porous, loudness leaking out of the concert space and time to accompany metalheads in their mundane social experiences. Another idea that would deserve attention and was not discussed in this dissertation is loudness' participation in what we might call the "erotic respiration of the concert." This theme intimately bounds the notions of space and time. Loudness, during concerts, is not at a constant maximum, nor does it simply amplify regularly during the night. It is rather a respiration. It is tide-like, inflating and subsiding with each new act and break, and even within a single performance or song. This sonic tide coincides with the respiration of both individual and collective bodies. Individually, the explosion and recesses of sound embody the music pulse, an embodiment for example manifest for metalheads in the pit, whose succession of contemplative, ecstasy, and idle pauses seems dictated by loudness variations. Collectively, as the music blasts through the concert house, drawing every body as close to the stage as possible, it becomes unclear where individuals start and end. This collective body then acquires a specific agency inherently tied to loudness' pulse.[143] This link between time and space, individual and collective bodies, bound through eroticism, is a fascinating topic which will undoubtedly retain our attention in the future.

Earlier drafts of this dissertation featured such reflections prominently. Our reader might, therefore, question our decision to finally leave them out. The reason

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[143] High-angle shots of concerts illustrate particularly well this idea, see for instance https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOHY1YxX5iA or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ql4qxin7p6I.

we did so is that such an endeavor would have deserved an entire dissertation in and of itself. It would have required engaging the rich literatures on time and space in psychology, sociology, and philosophy. As argued previously, our work is already located at the cross-roads of four research streams. Appealing to two additional literatures would have forced us to evolve at a relatively superficial level in every of these fields, breaking with the theoretical depth which, in our opinion, should characterize a doctoral work. Furthermore, completing this study would have required using alternative methodologies as we found that semiotics, or at least our understanding of it, was not entirely adapted to address and represent the transgressive and erotic power of loudness with respect to time and space.

B. Gender issues

The second theme which could have benefited from a thorough treatment is gender, notably in its relation to identity and politics. Despite a changing landscape and some sub-genres' exceptions, metal is still a predominantly male phenomenon and our sample represents this lack of diversity. Furthermore, the community's collective identity celebrates values, which, in our society, are frequently construed as more masculine, including violence, competition, power, and manly solidarity. Although we interviewed female metalheads both formally and informally, this study is first and foremost an investigation of the *masculine* valorization of loudness and its experience.

Our work therefore calls for extensions which could bear cast light on both the consumption of sound and construction of gender. Such an extension could, for example, consist in addressing the gendered character of senses and sensations, first as subjective experiences. In our context, notably, we could have investigated to what extent the experience of loudness contributes to form and reinforce metalheads' gender identity. Such a study could powerfully contribute to Butler's study of performativity (Butler 1988), considering not only how the consumption of loudness expresses masculinity, but also how it performs it and ground it in deep somatic processes. Such a gendered approach however, should not be

restricted to a phenomenological perspective, but also consider senses and sensations as historical constructs. In a different context, such framing could, for example, lead to consider to what extent sight is construed as a masculine rather than feminine sense. If, as argued previously, science relies primarily on an ocular-centric paradigm, construing sight as a masculine sense could contribute to reinforce the position of patriarchy by comforting the masculine dominance over sciences.

We left these issues pending for the same reasons we only indirectly addressed the spatial and temporal dimensions of the loudness experience. This study would have required leveraging entirely different corpuses of literature, notably gender and queer studies, hindering our ability to delve deeper into the theories we currently use. Ultimately, we believe this absence does not curb the relevance of our findings. Although our developments build on a heavily gendered context, they resulted in the identification of relatively de-contextualized processes. The somatic learning processes we discuss, for example, or the spiritual search of a continuity with the other are likely to be relevant to both men's and women's experience of sound, although they might be articulated and performed differently. In sum, addressing more fully gender issues with respect to metal and loudness consumption constitutes a very promising project, it is safe to argue that our current findings already improves significantly our understanding of female consumers' relation to sound and self-destruction.

IV. Contextualization

Our research offers an in-depth study of loudness consumption and offers practical solutions to tackle hearing impairment issues. The last question we will address in this dissertation is to what extent our findings and recommendations could be extended beyond the specific context of metal concerts and loudness consumption. This question actually implies three underlying issues. First, to what extent is our work relevant to other music communities? Second, to what extent is our work relevant to other public health issues? And finally, echoing our previous reflections about gender, is this work relevant to female consumers? We will start

255

with this latter point before considering the case of alternative communities and health issues.

A. Addressing the female consumption of loudness

As argued previously, our developments are likely to represent more accurately the masculine consumption and valorization of loudness than its feminine pendant. This orientation might cast doubt upon our findings' extension to the overall female population. We acknowledge this risk, but do not believe it should lead to discard these conclusions altogether when it comes to female consumers. We noted that our work, identifying anthropological processes, is theoretically relevant to both men and women's experience of self-destruction and loudness consumption. Similarly, most of the implications for current research and public policies we summarize in table7 could benefit both genders. For example, reinforcing the positive aesthetic connotation of hearing protections is likely to appeal to every music enthusiast, male or female. As a precaution, however, we invite policy-makers to exert some caution in applying these recommendations, and to systematically consider these issues from a gendered perspective to fully grasp these actions' reach, or lack thereof.

For instance, we, for instance, recommended relying on the community to facilitate the diffusion of protective solutions, notably by easing metal musicians' access to high-end hearing protections (cf. III. Conclusion). From a gendered perspective, such a solution might not be without flaws. A crushing majority of metal musicians is male, a prominence we observed both in our mundane interactions with metalheads and participation in concerts. Facilitating musicians' access to hearing protections might, therefore, benefit male consumers more than female ones. Furthermore, the underlying objective of this targeting strategy was mainly to foster richer debates within the community. We argued that prominent figures with access to high-end products might help the rest of metal consumers to form more mature and reflexive positions towards hearing protections through dialogue; but it might be difficult for women to identify with male metalheads, especially considering the status of women in the community (Walser 1993,

256

pp108-136). Lacking role models, women might therefore benefit only marginally from such a policy. This reflection does not imply that this type of action should be discarded. It invites, however, to think complementary solutions aimed at female consumers.

B. Extension to other music communities

Every musical community is likely to differ in its prototypical relation to loudness, the body, and self-destruction. To assess our findings' reach, it therefore appears necessary to consider whether our work makes sense for amateurs of alternative musical genres, such as electro, punk, or pop. Some values we identified, as well as the recommendations we derived from them, are likely to apply as is to other musical communities. Our discussion of loudness destructive violence, of the epistemic and self-transformative processes it implies, is not specific to metal and is therefore likely to be relevant in other musical contexts. The specific ways through which an electro enthusiast forms alternative understandings about his body are, for example, likely to differ structurally from those experienced by a metalhead; notably due to the less aggressive and violent texture of its sound. However, the somatic nature of the process, the importance taken by the subjective experience of pain, are likely to be relatively stable properties. Similarly, our reflections on the political potential of loudness focus on value processes rather than on the specific content of metal's project. The mechanisms we identify are not specific to the context we derived them from and can help to understand the consumption of loudness in other musical genres.

Some of our conclusions might require a more significant re-contextualization. It is notably the case of the aesthetic valorization of loudness. The specificities of metal aesthetics partly drove our reflections in this regard. The positive connotation hearing protections takes for some metal consumers is, for example, linked to earplugs' filtering value. This value takes a critical importance in a genre which relies heavily on distorted guitar sounds, as well as growled vocals, while valorizing the genre musicianship notably expressed through soli (Walser 1993, pp50-51). Other musical scenes, which feature cleaner and better-

defined sounds, are likely to be less sensitive to communications leveraging this filtering property. Conversely, metal consumers' preference for bare listening notably stems from loudness' ability to perform power. The role played by power in the definition of metal's collective identity certainly makes this issue more pressing in our context than in other music communities. It therefore invites to consider whether the articulation of loudness and power is important enough in other contexts to be leveraged or taken into account. Beyond these genre-specific points, however, some elements of our aesthetic reflections appear to have implications which *de facto* trespass the boundaries of our research field. The idea that the aesthetic value of protective solutions is crucial to music listeners, for example, is likely to apply to most music enthusiasts, regardless of their preferred genre. Similarly for loudness spiritual value; although other communities will probably differ in the ways they articulate loudness, control, and let-go, our critique of consumer health research is not context-dependent. By breaking the research stream's monopoly on the articulation of control and let-go, our discussion invites to consider the diversity of spiritual projects coexisting and interacting in our society. Practically speaking, our proposition to work on more open and less intrusive solutions is likely to accommodate a wide variety of spiritual projects, as it builds upon the core characteristic of spiritual experiences across cultures, at least for Bataille: an increasing openness to, and continuity with, the other.

C. Extension to other public health issues

The last point we wish to address concerns the potential application of our findings to other public health issues. Identifying similarities between loudness consumption and other types of self-destructive behaviors might allow capitalizing on our research to tackle other social problems more efficiently. The risk in looking for such extensions would be to focus on the appearance rather than on the underlying principles of public health issues, on the formal plane instead of the content one. Our introduction suggested that studying the use of hearing protections might ultimately help to push the use of condoms or helmets in

recreational activities. In both cases, public policy-makers strive to promote the adoption of a protective product in order to prevent dangerous side effects in recreational activities (e.g. head injuries, sexually-transmitted diseases and infections). However, the processes we defined and discussed reveal that loudness consumption involves challenges which are, to some extent, much closer to issues such as overeating, lack of physical exercise, or excessive alcohol consumption. These different hazards share a gradual dimension, which notably allows for a learning process, be it somatic or cognitive. The degradation implied by alcohol or food consumption, as well as insufficient physical exercise, is progressive. The consumer is usually able to experience their detrimental effects before their fatal or seriously handicapping consequences occur. The risk to suffer these behaviors' consequences is high, but the severity of the outcome is quite low. For example, the probability of getting tinnitus after attending a concert unprotected is close to 100%. However, such tinnitus is very likely to subside after a few hours. Conversely, the risks involved by refusing to use condoms or helmets are characterized by a low probability, but a potentially dramatic outcome. The probability of contracting AIDs after an unprotected relationship is lower than that of suffering from tinnitus after a concert. However, the realization of the risk would be much more detrimental to the individual. For such issues, using a catastrophic framing would therefore make more sense, even if alternative framings could be as, if not more, efficient. In sum, our findings are more likely to extend to high-risk/low-outcome health issues than low-risk/high-outcome ones.

These reflections do not imply that our results are irrelevant to low-risk/high-outcome health issues. For example, our discussion of loudness spiritual value is very much relevant to sexual relationships. Marzano (2007b, p117) suggests that sexual relations are the most intense form of relation to the other. Sexuality is also the most obvious form of eroticism studied by Bataille (1957). As such, the spiritual processes and stakes we identify in loudness consumption – the interplay of the norm and its transgression, the research of a fundamental continuity with the other – are likely to be relevant to sexual relations as well. As a consequence, metal consumers' understanding and critique of hearing protections

could cast light on individuals' valorization of condoms, which also implies the irruption of a synthetic boundary between the self and the other. We could extend our results in other directions and do invite policy-makers to consider how these findings could inform the treatment of other issues. Our specific recommendations, however, should not be applied without discrimination. Their extension to new fields would require taking into account their peculiarities, in order solutions more efficient and respectful of the contexts and experiences at stake.

Conclusion

Suggested listening:

- Iron Maiden – Hallowed be thy Name [Live] (1982)

The consumption of loudness is a rich issue, and policy-makers' difficulty to address it manifests the lack of conceptual and methodological tools adapted to deal with sound. This dissertation addresses this lack and, in the process, offers ways to tackle the detrimental consequences of loudness consumption. It offers rapidly implementable solutions, as well as long-term political recommendations, which could result in increased well-being at the social and individual level. Our work, however, is not only a study about sound, but also a study through sound. It emphasizes how a sounded approach to our social life can contribute to theories well beyond acoustics and psycho-acoustics; in particular, semiotics, body culture studies, and public health. From a political perspective, this sounded approach emphasizes that self-destructive consumption practices, often framed as nihilistic or non-reflexive, actually fulfill important functions at the individual and collective levels. In doing so, it compels to profoundly reconsider the ways we articulate the notion of health and the body in current research and public policies. In sum, our work highlights and partially unpacks the rich potential of sound when it comes to the understanding of our social lives. As such, this conclusion could actually be better understood as an interlude. It is an invitation, directed to ourselves and other researchers, to progress on the road paved by sound studies. It is a request to feature sound, and its materiality, more prominently in our research agendas. It is a call, in other words, to consider the fundamentally sounded character of our social lives and experiences.

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Glossary

Black metal (second wave): a subgenre of extreme metal which emerged in the early 1990s, usually featuring fast tempi, shrieked vocals, blast beat drumming patterns, and lo-fi productions. The sub-genre lyrical themes often include a fascination and awe for nature, as well as references to mythical and folkloric figures.

Illustration: Darkthrone – A Blaze in the Northern Sky
(See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZmDL_PzvdY)

Blast beat: a drumming pattern based on sixteenth-note played at a very high tempo (or thirty-second notes at a slower tempo) played on the bass drum and snare, as well as ride, crash, and/or hi-hat. This pattern, common in death metal and black metal, creates a dense wall of sound.

Illustration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNL9ypFdAzI

Circle pit: a collective dance move where a large number of metalheads run in a circle, usually until the circle dissolves into more individual and chaotic moshing practices.

Illustration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nOHY1YxX5iA

Death metal: a subgenre of extreme metal which emerged in the mid-1980s as a radicalization of thrash metal, usually featuring growled vocals, double bass and/or blast beat drumming, complex rhythmic structures, tremolo picking, minor keys or atonality, and elaborate soli. The sub-genre lyrical field initially manifested a fascination or anxiety with respect to death and the macabre.

Illustration: Death – Pull the Plug

(See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYYUR21_G9c)

Double bass drumming: a drumming pattern using either two bass drums, or a double-kick-pedal, creating deep layers of sounds.

Illustration (two bass drums): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRx45ma_bXU
Illustration (double-kick pedal):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lkZPJES45Q

Drone metal: a minimalist subgenre at the crossroads of experimental electronic music and metal which emerged progressively during the 1990s, usually featuring the use of sustained, low, and heavily distorted notes, with little harmonic variations and blurred rhythmic structures.

Illustration: Earth – Teeth of Lions Rule the Divine
(See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qf648bEndkQ)

Hard rock: an aesthetic radicalization of rock which emerged in the 1970s, usually featuring more aggressive vocals and drumming, as well as more heavily distorted guitars and bass guitars.

Illustration: AC/DC – Let There be Rock
(See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3nEAmt5AZ8)

Heavy metal: a term which refers either to the metal genre as a whole, or its original 1970s form. In this dissertation, the term takes the latter meaning. It designates a loosely defined sub-genre, close to hard rock, but making use of heavier sounds. It notably relies on denser distortions, as well as tritone or diminished fifth chords (i.e. a specific type of musical interval often conveying a sense of impending doom).

Illustration: Black Sabbath – Black Sabbath

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1t24PsZxohY

Headbanging: an iconic dance move in the metal genre. It consists in repeatedly shaking one's head, and sometimes entire upper torso, in a top-down or circular fashion. While moshing can only be a collective practice, headbanging can be an individual move.

Illustration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0vf3o0vOi4

Mosher: a metalhead who moshes. The term can be applied contextually (i.e. to refer to a person who is currently dancing) or to describe a more stable identity (i.e. to refer to a person whose enjoyment of the concert is inherently tied to moshing).

Moshing: a collection of individual and collective moves and practices which constitute the dancing repertoire of metal. The exact moves constituting this repertoire are unfixed, and partly depend on the subgenre considered. Moshing usually involves punching, kicking, or slamming into dance partners. Despite its chaotic appearance, moshing involves rules, such as systematically picking up a fallen dancer and, usually, sparing other dancers' face.

Illustration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1G-5N49-4c

Mosh pit or pit: a small area in front of the stage dedicated to moshing. Although it is sometimes delimited by physical boundaries (e.g. a few steps), its size is usually variable. The pit extends and shrinks depending on the number of metalheads willing to mosh. The term "pit" is sometimes used in a more general sense to designate the orchestra, in opposition to the other areas of the concert house, and notably the bleachers. By metonymy, the term "pit" sometimes refers to the group of moshers which constitutes this space.

Glam or hair metal: a hybrid of metal and hard rock which emerged in the late 1970s and expanded rapidly in the 1980s. Glam metal is notably characterized by its visual aesthetics blurring gender codes (e.g. use of make-up, permed hair), as well as its lyrical themes focused on Dyonisian themes such as carefree sexual relationships, drug consumption, and an overall sense of carelessness.

Illustration: Poison – Talk Dirty to me
(See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xCChxBSRo1Y)

Thrash metal: a subgenre of metal which emerged in the mid-1980s. Thrash constitutes an aesthetic radicalization of heavy metal, and notably features more prominently shouted vocals, as well as faster tempi, high-speed soli (sometimes referred to as shredding), and low-register riffs. It is also one of the most politicized subgenres when it comes to lyrics, sometimes dealing with themes such as social injustice, corruption, or war-mongering.

Illustration: Metallica – Battery
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=md3B3I7Nmvw

Tremolo picking: a form of high-speed alternate picking.

Illustration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJmht9_PEq8 (Until 0:28)

Wall of death: a collective dance move in which the pit first separates into two groups which later rush at each other on the singer's order.

Illustration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EORH8Nx6FHU

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Internet banner of www.bodybuilding.com on December 12th 2013

Appendix 2 – Advertisement for hearing self-protection (Action on Hearing Loss)