

# TRIBUS URBANAS

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN ARGENTINEAN YOUTH CULTURES



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<sup>1</sup> Illustration on the cover: Skater- urban tribe posing in front of a skate- ramp at a skate- competition in the Parque Cabañas. Illustrations in this thesis are photographs taken by me during fieldwork.

## **Abstract**

This thesis is the result of four months of fieldwork among the so called '*tribus urbanas*' or urban tribes in Tres Arroyos, Argentina. Urban tribes are groups of people who share common interests in urban areas. The members of these relatively small groups tend to have similar worldviews, dress styles and behavioral patterns. This thesis focuses on two urban tribes: the *skaters* and the *heavies*. Within the issue of urban tribes and youth culture, the internet and music are of great importance. Music and the internet connect people who can eventually build a (group) identity around these subjects. Boundaries are created towards the outside world to fortify this identity by creating an *ingroup* and an *outgroup*. This is also done by resistance towards society through music, behavior, appearance and even the internet. Resistance is one of the most important factors of the formation of urban tribes, as is authenticity. Music is the main common denominator of the skaters and heavies. This thesis will provide new insights within the dynamics of identity construction in youth cultures as it focuses on how urban tribes construct a group identity through music and the internet. A special focus will lie on the so called internet-based urban tribes.

## **Foreword**

With the making of this thesis I have been helped by a lot of people whom I want to thank personally in this foreword.

First of all I want to thank my informants who have received me warmly and have given me one of the best times of my life. Both the skaters and the heavies in their own way: it was more than a pleasure meeting them. I especially want to thank Estefania Soriano without whom this thesis would not even exist. She contacted me with almost everybody I met and really helped me with the process of researching and interviewing.

Then I want to thank my family and friends for putting up with me for four months. I want to thank them for making Tres Arroyos my home.

And last but certainly not least, I want to thank my tutor Elisabet Rasch. Without her vision and constructive criticism this thesis would not be what it is now.

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Map 1: Plan of Tres Arroyos



Map 2: Tres Arroyos in Argentina<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Source maps: www.tresarroyosturismo.com

## **Introduction**

*It was a Friday afternoon, two weeks after my arrival in Tres Arroyos. A smell of sweat, mixed with motor oil hung in the air. Skateboards were making a deafening sound on the hard-wood ramps and quarter-pipes, but somewhere in the background the harsh sounds of Argentinean punk rock were still audible. Seven male teenagers were skating, shouting, having fun and showing off their dangerous tricks. Iguanos skatepark was a rather small indoor skatepark, filled with ramps, quarter-pipes and grind-rails. Outside there were a half-pipe and some ramps, but due to the rain, everybody was inside. “Well, this is my skatepark, Do you like it?” asked Matias. “I sure do.”, answered I “And these skaters? Is this your urban tribe?” “No, I do not really belong to a specific skater-tribe, but the kids who are skating here do. Do you see that tall, dark guy over there? That is Ricardo, he is the leader of the skaters here, if you want to know more about this tribe, he is your man.” A couple of other skaterkids entered the room and asked Matias if they could skate inside, because of the rain. “Of course you can.”, said he. Right when the new skaterkids wanted to go on the ramp, Ricardo stood up and said: “Hey, what are you doing here, this is our terrain.” “Matias Lopez said that we could skate here because of the rain, said the smallest of the four skaterkids. “Well, I say that you cannot skate here, we are the Iguanos skaters. I know you, you skate at the Parque Cabañas, you guys do not belong here, go away.” On that moment Matias stepped in to tell Ricardo to stay calm and let the kids skate. A bit piqued, Ricardo continued skating. “You see,” said Matias, “These guys are very protective of their tribe. They are just like the music they listen to: tough, punk, and rough and around the edges, but with the inside of a ballad.”*

The above described situation is typical for the urban tribes in Tres Arroyos, Argentina and probably for more subcultures: the exclusion of others to become more close as a group. Urban tribes are groups of people who share common interests in urban areas. The members of these relatively small groups tend to have similar worldviews, dress styles and behavioral patterns (Cafarelli, 2008: 13). Furthermore, it comes to the forefront that the urban tribe was very close. The teens feel very much connected to each other and their skatepark. The skatepark itself forms a sort of bounding mechanism. Another characteristic is their love for music. The whole time they were skating, fast punk rock was playing and the skaters sung along with the songs and talked about the bands and the songs.

Within the issue of urban tribes and youth culture, the internet and music are of great importance. It is striking that people who never even met, feel connected to each other just because they have seen pictures of each other or listen to the same band (e.g. Williams, 2006; Moore; 2007).

This raises questions about the importance of music for the urban tribes, how the urban tribes create a group identity, how the urban tribes are kept together and what other important building blocks of identity there are for the urban tribes. There is very little scientific research on Argentinean urban tribes, due to the novelty of the phenomenon. It is important to do research on these urban tribes, though, because it is such a vivid subject in Argentina and it is slowly spreading throughout the rest of Latin America. Doing research on these urban tribes helps understanding contemporary Latin American youth, as Argentina is the leading country in the urban tribe phenomenon (Caffarelli, 2008). This thesis, therefore, will search for an answer to the above posed questions.

I will elaborate these themes through scientific literature about, among other subjects, identity, youth culture, and media (e.g. Chrysoschoou, 2004; Moore, 2007; Williams, 2006). In the process creating an image that is appealing to the rest of the group is of importance. The reason of this is that the teens seek recognition from their peers, because they want to feel like they belong somewhere. This belonging to a group gives them more self esteem (Ter Bogt, 2000: 18). Once teenagers belong to an urban tribe, they start to represent themselves as part of that tribe instead of as an individual. Their personal identity and their group identity start to overlap each other, with the group identity gaining importance (Chrysoschoou, 2004:53). The group identity is being formed by making their own urban tribe the *ingroup*, while the outside world is seen as the *outgroup*. This process of *othering* is kept alive by certain symbols and rituals, some of them coming from music or the internet.

In scientific literature there has been written a lot about youth subcultures. The academic discussion about youth culture is age old, since it is of great importance for any society to have a better understanding of the youth, as they will be the adults of the future. Scientific research helps to find out their ways of thinking and what their exact place in society is. The youth has always been a difficult group in society as they are in an in-between stage of their lives, so it seems like they do not fit anywhere (Alan France and Sandu: 2007). Therefore they tend to stick together, according to their common interests, the most important being music. The main focus in scientific studies, also lies in the youth culture's connection with music (e.g. Frith: 1978; Stokes: 1994; Roe: 1999; Ter Bogt: 2000). But as is the case with contemporary subcultures, the internet starts to play a big role in the forming and maintenance

of these urban tribes too. Without the internet, there would not even be certain urban tribes like, for example the *floggers*, a typical Argentinean urban tribe. There has been very little scientific research done on this particular subject, while the internet is such an important source of information for these urban tribes. This thesis searches to enlighten this subject in youth culture studies.

### **Questions and methodology**

With this thesis I want to provide new insights within the dynamics of identity construction in youth cultures. I will put the focus on the Argentinean urban tribes and their connection with music, but also on the role the internet has in their lives, as there is a void in scientific studies about this subject. The main question in this thesis is:

*‘How do the urban tribes in Tres Arroyos construct their identity through music and the internet?’.*

In my research I have divided this question in four subquestions, the first being about who the urban tribes are, followed by how the members of the urban tribes give meaning to their group in their daily life. The third question is about the importance of music in forming a group identity and the last one is about the way the internet contributes to the construction of urban tribes.

I did my research about the skaters and the heavies in Tres Arroyos. In my opinion it was useful to do research on two urban tribes to make my it more complete. Both of the tribes have different qualities that contributed to my research, like the heavies’ interest in the internet.

As becomes clear above, I have done my research in Tres Arroyos, Argentina. Tres Arroyos is a considerably small town in the province of Buenos Aires, 500 kilometres south of the capital. It has an estimate 58 000 inhabitants throughout the whole *partido*. Tres Arroyos is mostly a rural city, but with a big centre, suburbs and even slums. It has different discotheques and clubs where the urban tribes can hang out. It is known that certain places in the centre ‘belong’ to a certain urban tribe as they always hang there. The centre used to be full of urban tribes, each tribe having their own place to hang. Nowadays you can still find them, if you know where to look for them. A lot of attention used to be given to the urban tribes in Tres Arroyos as some people in town saw them as a problem. This is because of the rivalry between the tribes and because they seem non-productive as they pretty much hang around town most of the time. Nowadays this is less the case, as the urban tribes in Tres

Arroyos are hardly visible. They are still there, but more underground. Most of the urban tribes remain in the big cities as Buenos Aires or Cordoba.

The main method I used during the research was participant observation. Participant observation in this case meant hanging around with the urban tribes. I tried to fit in as well as possible, joining them in their activities as going to concerts, skating competitions, motorcycle events et cetera.

I drew most of my information out of informal conversations, because I noticed that during interviews the atmosphere is more formal and the teens do not give a lot of useful information in that atmosphere. This is not the case with informal conversations. I tried to fill up the missing information by open interviewing my key-informants. They were a bit older than the rest of the group, and they knew a little bit more about their tribe than the rest did, because of their experience in the tribes. For the skaters, my key-informant was Matias Lopez. For the heavies they were Estefania Soriano and Pablo DelValle. I also had a key-informant for general information about urban tribes. This was Andrea Tumini, she has done a lot for the Tresarroyan urban tribes when she had an alternative clothing store called 'Bunker'. All in all, I have spoken to 28 people, 14 of which were skaters, 12 were heavies. Other important people I have spoke to were, as said, Andrea Tumini. But also Cristian Suarez, who is one of the last *floggers* in Tres Arroyos, he told me a lot about *floggers* and the disappearance of the urban tribes in Tres Arroyos. Another important informant was José 'Pepe' Megna who was the president of 'Alas de la Libertad', the Tresarroyan motorcycle club, he was also one of the main '*motoqueros*'<sup>3</sup> and has done a lot for the heavies in his younger years.

Another method used to get information was the use of photo cameras. I gave the skaters disposable photo cameras to take them with them while they are hanging together and told them to make photos. Later I discussed the photos with them. This project was meant to help me get a more 'real' image of how the urban tribes behave when I am not around, but sadly this method did not work the way it was supposed to.

### **Composition of the thesis**

Following my research questions, this thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter is a theoretical framework, herein lies the theoretical base of the thesis. I want to state and elaborate on the theories I practically tested in the real life of the urban tribes. Before

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<sup>3</sup> *Motoqueros* are heavies with motorcycles

empirically talking about subcultures and identity it is important to know what scientific literature says about these topics. Topics that will come to the surface are amongst others: subcultures, identity, sense of belonging, group identity and music and internet as pillars for the construction of a certain identity.

The following chapters are of the empirical kind, the second being an introduction of the urban tribes. The purpose of this chapter is to show who and what the urban tribes are. I will talk about the skaters and heavies separately to map both of them and to introduce them to the reader. Theoretically seen this chapter will be about subculture and why the teens belong to a certain urban tribe. Sense of belonging and in-betweenness are important keywords.

The third chapter is about how the members of the urban tribes give meaning to their tribe in their daily life. This chapter is about how a group identity is created and maintained. Very important herein is resistance against the mainstream, rituals and the process of othering. The purpose of this section is to describe how both groups function. I will put the focus on how the tribes mark their borders of being a skater or heavy. I also want to make clear what it means to belong in the tribe to the members.

The fourth chapter is about the importance of music for the urban tribes. The purpose of this section is to describe the most important common denominator of both urban tribes, namely music. I want to make clear what music means to both tribes and why it means that much to them. Music can be used as a bonding mechanism for the tribe, but also as a means to resist against the mainstream, therefore maintaining the group identity by fortifying the subculture. The fifth and last empirical chapter is about the new found importance of the internet for the urban tribes. The purpose of this section is to make clear how in the modern day, the internet is slowly replacing music as the main common denominator and how the urban tribes see this as being non- authentic. I will particularly write about the net- heavies in this section, the internet- version of the heavies and new urban tribe. For some members being a heavy is somewhat of a born identity and net-heavies are not born with it, they became it. Non- authenticity in their opinion could destroy the subculture. Authenticity is very much a boundary the urban tribes to keep their tribe inclusive and 'real'.

## **1. Youth cultures, identity and media**

This thesis talks about urban tribes: the skaters and the heavies. The most important factor of them is how they build a group identity as a youth culture. Herein I will put the main focus on music and the internet. Before we go to the empiricism, it is important to know what scientific literature says about these subjects. Topics that will come to the surface in this theoretic chapter are amongst others: subcultures, identity, sense of belonging, group identity and music and internet as pillars for the construction of a certain identity. These are important subjects because subcultures are appealing to the youth as they find a group of people that understands them and to whom they actually belong. This is often as an act of rebellion against the mainstream or their social class (Ter Bogt, 2000). Music has always been a common denominator for the youth cultures, but nowadays this can be shared with the internet. Urban tribes nowadays communicate through internet and it is seen as a social space. Even though, some may say that this affects the authenticity of the urban tribes (Williams, 2006) By this type of thinking, among other things, a group identity is being formed by creating an *ingroup* and an *outgroup*.

### **1.1: Youth cultures**

In this paragraph I will cover the subject of subcultures. I will explain how they emerge within a society, why they especially are appealing to the youth, the position of the youth in society and why belonging to a certain subculture often is related to the social class a person belongs to. The main topics that will come to order here are: resistance to the mainstream or to other classes, the in-betweenness of the youth and class struggles.

#### **Resistance and the emergence of subcultures**

The most important factor in the emergence of subcultures has always been resistance against the dominant culture. Since at least the 1960s, youth culture has been an important site for resistance against dominant society. At the beginning youth cultures were examined as “subterranean traditions” of deviance and nonconformity, expressions of anomie that share elements of mainstream culture but are sufficiently threatening to provoke labeling and discipline by authoritarian institutions. More recently, scholars in the interdisciplinary field of “cultural studies” have seen subcultures as enclaves of resistance to “hegemony,” a form of covert opposition to the taken-for-granted ideologies embedded in symbols, rituals, and

popular culture (Benson, 2003: 33-34). What these approaches have in common is the assumption that the political potency of youth culture lies in its “style,” the transgression of prevailing meaning systems as manifest in dress, argot, and imagery. Studies of subcultures have always primarily identified resistance in the subversive qualities of their look, sound, and attitude. Thus, in focusing on cultural consumption, symbolic gestures, and leisure-time lifestyles, scholars of subcultures have neglected the processes of production and participation that also constitute practices of resistance (Moore, 2007: 438). This resistance is a different approach in identifying resistance not only in the shock value of style but also in the processes of creative work and cultural participation involved in the creation of commercially independent media or artwork (Moore, 2007: 439).

The resistance against the adult, corporate world allows resistance and empowerment to take shape not simply as significations and representations, but also in creating an unusual kind of “public sphere” where young people can organize themselves and express dissenting viewpoints about critical social issues (Moore, 2007: 439). Boundaries are created against the adult corporate world. This is of importance when it comes identifying with the group: they are different than that world. Urban tribes like the heavies or skaters show this by dressing and behaving differently than the mainstream. Youth subcultures often emerge as a reaction to the adult world or the so called ‘mainstream’. What is important here too is the recognition by their peers from their group.

### **The in-betweenness of the youth**

Teenagers are often confused about themselves, this is because of the ‘in-betweenness’ they experience. That is the main reason that they want to belong somewhere. Subcultures are therefore very appealing to the youth. They can fulfill their need to belong and, most importantly, within the group they are seen as a full person. Benson (2003) states that during its postwar decline, sociologists have noted two contrary impulses emerging in Western society: the desire to be a strong individual and the need to feel like a part of something. Urban tribes can accommodate both (Benson, 2003: 34).

It is so, that ‘the youth’ is in a difficult position within society. They are too old to be children, but too young to be seen as adults. Youth as a social category has historically been constructed as a stage between childhood and adulthood (Ter Bogt, 2000: 29).

Youth as a legal definition constructs their citizenship as transitional. For example, legal rights to marry, to be employed, to join the army, to leave home, to drive a car or to get access to social benefits are all fragmented, thus creating uncertainty about young people’s

position as citizens (Ter Bogt, 2000: 16). It is thus a state of limbo where the young are in transition from one state of being to another. This 'in-betweenness' gives young people limited status as citizens, and they are seen as 'non-citizens' or 'citizens in-waiting' (Alan France and Sandu, 2007: 298). It is a stage in the course of life where a young person is thought to move from dependency to independency, yet in reality this process is neither linear nor guaranteed nor is this transition universal or 'natural', being a set of social definitions embedded in an historical and cultural context ( Alan France and Sandu, 2007: 298). Youth is also greatly fragmented by age, gender and racialized identities. To see it as a homogeneous social category is to deny the different experiences different groups have of 'being young' (Alan France & Sandu, 2007:300). This is however often done by adults: they seem to have forgotten how it is to be young and how important it is to be recognized. As a result of social, economic and political changes youth as an 'in-between stage' in the course of life is changing (Alan France and Sandu, 2007: 305). Young people are not seen as full citizens and therefore they seek recognition. This means that for example the skaters and heavies are being formed as they tend to seek each other up to recover from that in-between stage and get the feeling that they are indeed a full person with their urban tribe as a safe haven.

### **Youth culture and class struggles**

One of the most important factors in the emerging of subcultures, is the social class an individual has been born in. The concept of subculture is even seen as a symbolic response to the conditions of class. It is part of an on-going working-class struggle against the socio-economic circumstances of their existence (Bennet: 2000: 19-20). In general subcultures borrow from the dominant class, inflecting and inverting its signs to create a bricolage in which the signs of the dominant class are there and just recognizable as such, but constituting a quite different, subversive whole (Stokes, 1994: 20). It is important to notice that, in general, traditional subcultures consisted of people from the working or the lower classes. This is also the case with the heavies in my research. People from the upper class were oftentimes seen as the 'mainstream' and thus something the youth wanted to rebel to. With the coming of modern means like the internet, upper class- teenagers really started to participate in subcultures (Ter Bogt, 2000: 33). This is because initially they were the only ones with access to these means. The participation of the upper-class in subcultures changed the academic discussion, because now the 'mainstream' could participate in subcultures, while they were initially the ones to whom there was a resistance. New boundaries had thus to

be set. Within some new subcultures, like for example the skaters or the *floggers*<sup>4</sup>, who were in fashion last year in Argentina, the mainstream shifted from the upper- class towards solely the adult world. For most subcultures, though, the upper-class is still seen as the mainstream. The working and lower classes play an important role within subcultures, because frequently they are defined or excluded in terms of the classificatory systems of the dominant group whose guiding motive is the control and cooption of potentially problematic ‘others’. The expression of identity of the lower classes is usually not acknowledged by the dominant class. (Stokes, 1994: 20). Social boundaries like these can lead to a feeling of ‘us’ against ‘them’ in which teenagers from the lower classes could start to rebel against ‘them’, the upper class, by forming exclusive groups or urban tribes. As I have already mentioned: urban tribes have the tendency to have a certain resistance against the mainstream. The upper classes, in this case, are often seen as the mainstream as they are always in the news and more or less decide what is ‘in’ or ‘out’.

## **1.2: Identity**

In this paragraph I will elaborate on the concept of identity. For my research, group identity is of great importance, but before I get to that, I will first explain the overall theories about identity. After that, I will talk about group identity by explaining four key elements of the sense of belonging to a community. The main topics of this paragraph will be the constructivist vision of identity, reinforcing and cross-cutting cleavages, sense of belonging, *ingroup* and *outgroup*. To subcultures building an group identity is crucial, without this identity the subculture would either not exist or fall apart after shortly being together.

### **Identity: a fluid concept**

Like many concepts within ethnic anthropology, identity is a fluid, difficult to explain concept. Fredrik Barth (1969), however, states: ‘Identity is a changing process. Individuals are not stuck in their social and cultural setting, but they consciously strive certain goals. Social identities are fluid, depending on their context, they are subjects of negotiation (Barth, 1969: 24). Fredrik Barth was the anthropologist who initially broke with the essentialist discourse of ethnic identity. According to him it was important to do research on the boundaries between different social groups. Today the internal processes of identity building are of more importance. Identity nowadays is often seen by scientists (e.g. Ghorashi, 2003;

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<sup>4</sup> *Floggers* are a typical Argentinean urban tribe. It is a rather new phenomenon that started in the mid-2000’s with the coming of the social network- website *www.fotolog.com*.

Chryssouchoou, 2004) as something that comes from within a person and that is actually constructed by that person himself, even though identities can also be forced upon people. In this way, there is an interaction between classification and identification. Identity is thus a process in which the 'self' plays an important role. What is meant by the 'self' is someone's inner person or, to say, the individual within a group. This, however, does not mean that there is no group identity, but I will talk about that further on.

Halleh Gorashi (2003) states that identity is perceived as a process of change. Identity is not the fixed and given character of a person or a group. It is a rather dynamic process, a changing view of the 'self' and 'other', constantly acquiring new meanings and forms through interactions with social contexts and within historical movements. It is important to know that identity in its multitude is a process of interaction between change and continuity and can be called a process of belonging (Ghorashi, 2003: 22). Ghorashi here, has a constructivist vision of identity, which is common nowadays within the social sciences. She states that identity, according to the constructivist vision, is a different, constructed, negotiable, situational and multidimensional concept of the 'self'. Identity knows change and variety. One person can also have several identities that can conflict with each other (Ghorashi, 2003: 21).

This is similar of what happens with cross cutting cleavages. Cross-cutting cleavage is a concept that recognizes that most people have multiple interests and identities that affect their views. (Baumann, 1999: 43). A person who considers himself a "worker", for example, does not necessarily define his identity exclusively by this characteristic. He might instead also focus on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, the particular industry he works in, and so on. Some or all of these other identities might well play a greater role in determining his identity than his belonging to the "working class"(Baumann, 1999). According to this, people always belong to several different groups that also help them construct their identity.

### **Group identity and the sense of belonging to a community**

As is explained by Ghorashi (2003: 22), identity always changes. When people belong to a certain group or community, they tend to see and identify themselves as part of that group. Therefore when an individual is interacting with another person, he will not act as a single individual but as a representative of a whole group or category of people. A skater walking down the street will be recognized as a skater, not as the person that he is. This is because people tend to exaggerate the similarities of those in the same group and exaggerate the differences between those in different groups. By doing this, they create an '*ingroup*' and an '*outgroup*'; the own group being the *ingroup*, with all the positive characteristics

(Chryssouchoou, 2004:53). There is a classification from the outside, while identification comes from the inside. It is communal for people to want to belong to the *ingroup*. The *outgroup* is often seen as very negative. What happens here is the definition between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in which members of the *ingroup* distance themselves from membership of the *outgroup* which does not share the same beliefs and ideas of their group and take more account of the beliefs and ideas of their social group (Chryssouchoou, 2004: 53).

McMillan & Chavis (1986) have done a lot of research on the topic of group identity, especially with the focus on the sense of belonging to a group or a community. Their research is still being used in academic discussions about group identity. They define the sense of belonging to a community as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together (McMillan & Chavis,1986: 7). They identified two dimensions of community, territorial and relational. The relational dimension of community has to do with the nature and quality of relationships in a community. Members can have some kind of contact and quality of relationship, but may live and in disparate locations, for example in the case of internet- urban tribes. Other communities may seem to be defined primarily according to territory, as in the case of neighborhoods, but even in such cases, proximity or shared territory cannot by itself constitute a community; the relational dimension is also essential (Mcmillan & Chavis, 1986: 8).

#### **Four elements of Sense of Community**

There are four elements of sense of belonging to a community according to McMillan & Chavis (1986: 12): Membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs and a shared emotional connection. These elements give us a look on why people join urban tribes, and how they are kept together. It is important to know how the urban tribes maintain themselves, because it shows how urban tribes give meaning to the formation of the tribes and why they do what they can to maintain the tribe the way it is.

The first element, McMilan and Chavis (1986) talk about is membership. This includes five attributes: boundaries, emotional safety, a sense of belonging and identification, personal investment and a common symbol system. A group needs boundaries to decide who is in or out, membership of a group provides emotional safety for its members and a sense of belonging and identification. It requires a personal investment to remain a member and a common symbol system to keep the group together and create a group code.

The second element, 'influence', works both ways: members need to feel that they have some influence in the group, and influence by the group on its members is needed for group cohesion.

When we speak of integration and fulfillment of needs, the third element, it is about the fact that members feel rewarded in some way for their participation in the communities.

The final element McMillan and Chavis (1986:14) speak of is a shared emotional connection for the members of the group, a subject similar to Benedict Anderson' imagined communities'. The "definitive element for true community", includes shared history and shared participation, or at least identification with the history. Anderson (2006) states that communities can be imagined, because members do not have to meet face-to-face in order to feel connected to each other. They can identify with the history of a community or its views, members hold in their minds a mental image of their affinity (Anderson, 2006: 6). Anderson (2006), unlike McMillan and Chavis (1986), talks about nations as communities. McMillan and Chavis (1986) take this even further and state that every group could be a community. The community is especially kept alive by symbolism like banners, and a certain lingo within the group. Anderson (2006) states that the identification with a group does not have to come from within the group, there are several other factors that can affect this. The media, for example, can also create imagined communities, through targeting a mass audience or generalizing and addressing citizens as the public (Anderson, 2006:7). In the case of the Argentinean urban tribes, the internet is the main reason the urban tribes can spread out and be kept alive.

### **1.3: Music, the internet and youth culture**

In this paragraph, I will elaborate music and the internet as main points of identification by urban tribes. I will first explain the main importance of music within subcultures and how this had gradually changed to the internet. I will then continue to explain how the coming of the internet has seemingly affected what the urban tribes consider to be authentic within their tribes. The main topics of this paragraph are: the music experience, identification, communication through the internet and authenticity.

#### **Music, media and identification**

When scholars first started to do research on the concept of subculture in the 1970's, it was primarily to study music- and style-based cultural phenomena. Simon Frith (1978) is one of the most important scholars to do research on this topic. Participation in youth subcultures has

therefore typically been characterized by specific types of music and clothing and participation in local, face-to-face music scenes. Between the late 1970s and the late 1990s, “subculture” was the predominant sociological concept used to characterize the relationship among music, culture, and identity. (Williams, 2006: 169). What has emerged over the past 25 years of research utilizing the subculture- concept is a silent assumption that music is *the* nexus of subcultural phenomena. Before the massive emergence of the internet, this was a true thing, but nowadays, this is not entirely the case; one of the most important factors to the construction of youth cultures nowadays is the emerging importance of the internet in subcultural experience and participation. Prior research has produced crucial and useful understandings of the links among music, culture, and identity (e.g., Bennett 2000; Frith 1978; Stokes, 1994; Martin, 1999 and Hudson, 2006). According to Simon Frith (1978), music is an essential component of many contemporary youth cultures. Especially themes linked to the content of the music are important when it comes to discussing the relation between youth cultures and music. Frith (1978) did his research in the 1970’s when punk was emerging and was considered very harsh. Nowadays the punk- wave has flown over, but still the content of songs is being discussed. Frith (1978) is not interested in understanding “how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces them, how it creates an experience (...) that we can only make sense of by *taking on* both a subjective and a collective identity” (Frith 1978, 109).

Similarly, Stokes (1994) sees music as “not simply a static cultural object which is produced and consumed, but an active code of resistance and a template which is used for the formation of new forms of individual and collective identity.” Implicit in this line of research are two aspects of identity and music. First, there is a relationship between music and identity, wherein music is seen as consequential in the creation of subcultures as well as a consequence of them. Second, through the musical experience—both making and listening to music—individuals are able to locate themselves in specific subcultural formations (Stokes, 1994: 91). There are several recent examples of this first point, which look at how individuals utilize music to construct collective identities and ritualize identity processes. The second point, that through the music experience we become a part of something larger than ourselves, requires that we conceptualize something beyond music, its producers, or its consumers. Following Stokes (1994), we can see that media, including the internet, “are integral to the formation of subcultures, playing a significant role in both their origin as well as prolonging their lifecycle. The media exist as systems of communication critical to the circulation of ideas, images, sounds and ideologies that bind culture(s) together (...) Some media legitimate while others

popularize, some preserve the esoteric while others are seen to sell out” (Stahl, 2004: 31). This is also the case with the Argentinean urban tribes, internet is a much used medium to communicate, but when used as the main common denominator for an urban tribe it is seen a non-authentic and selling out. This raises questions about the importance of music and internet, but also about their role in the construction of a solid group identity.

#### **1.4: The internet and authenticity**

Understanding how the internet functions within youth culture depends on how we conceptualize it. It can be said that it is a social object to which different people from different places attribute different sets of meanings. For participants of face-to-face subcultural scenes, the internet may be an information and communication medium in the strictest sense: it gets used primarily to communicate information about the face-to-face world (Hodkinson 2002: 34). For individuals who do not participate in face-to-face scenes, however, the internet is more than a medium; it is a social space through which personal and social identities are constructed, given meaning, and shared through the ritual of computer-mediated interaction. Contacts are made more easily and urban tribes do not need to have a ‘real’ place to meet anymore: they meet on the internet. With the coming of internet, urban tribes are more approachable for other people than before, because of the information available and the different forums on which people from different tribes can talk to each other. From this perspective, “communication becomes a powerful tool that organizes individual desires and dreams of belonging by representing a certain range of experiences, thereby offering the possibility for deep, affective investment” (Stahl 2004, 36). This raises new questions, especially about the loyalty towards the tribe and authenticity. The internet thus becomes the main source of information and communication for certain youth cultures. The internet-heavies, that I will talk about in chapter 5, for example have formed their group through the participation to *forosmetaleros.com.ar*, an internet forum that talks about heavy-culture. The catch with this, is that other urban tribes do not see the net- heavies or other internet-created tribes as authentic. Their basis doesn’t lie within music and lyrics they can relate to, like for example is the case with punk rock; this type of music really is the voice of the skaters. It is also a fact that internet-created urban tribes hardly meet face- to- face unless there is a planned meeting of if, for example, certain net-heavies are close friends. Still the net-heavy-community is very large and reaches out throughout the whole country. The conflict between music and the internet can be linked via the struggle for authentic subcultural identity. By constructing alternate paths to authentic selfhood, individuals who do not meet preexisting

subcultural criteria still have the opportunity to construct a subcultural identity and to reap the social-psychological benefits that come with it (Williams, 2006: 173).

Williams (2006) has been interested in developing a picture of how participants struggle with defining themselves and others as authentic. The struggle for authenticity occurs through the active appropriation of new communication media. Young people appropriate and rework communication media, constructing new narratives of personal and social experience (Williams, 2006: 195). The traditional measurement of authenticity according to urban tribes appears to be through going to local music scenes and earning respect through relating to the fitting music and shared meanings. The growth of internet scenes confounds the idea that a face-to-face scene is necessary because the internet allows individuals who are disconnected from local music scenes to interact within the subculture (Williams, 2006: 194). This raises questions about the purpose of the internet within the urban tribes, but also about authenticity as seen from outside net-tribes. New members, disconnected from music scenes, consider themselves authentic and utilize computer-mediated spaces to articulate their identities and experiences as for, example net-heavies or *floggers*. The internet provides sources of information and new social spaces within which youth from outside the urban tribe come to learn about, and self-identify as the tribe.

These youth evaluate their own positions within youth cultures and decide to claim a resistant, identity. But the influx of youth from outside the music subculture does not go unchallenged. In William's research on the internet straightedge youth culture it comes to the surface that net-straightedgers' personal commitments to straightedge norms do not convince all music-straightedgers (Williams, 2006: 195). This is similar to every other urban tribe where music is still the main source of bonding. Nevertheless, internet-created tribes continue to build what they perceive as authentic online as internet sites emerge as new subcultural scenes. To internet-created tribes, music is not the main bonding-aspect. It is the internet-communication that matters. They form kind of an urban tribe of their own on the internet.

### **1.5: Why skaters and heavies?**

I have chosen the skaters and the heavies for my research because both of the tribes are authentic urban tribes, who come forward from rebelling against the mainstream as is explained above. They both build their group identity through rituals and their love for their music. For both tribes the internet is of great importance, but for the heavies more than for the skaters, as the heavies have their own internet-based urban tribe. The heavies also have struggled with class issues for their whole lives.

In the next chapters I am going to introduce the urban tribes. I will explain the above written factors and will show how they emerged in Argentina and how they give meaning to their daily life



5

## **2: Who are the urban tribes?**

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<sup>5</sup> Facundo, Matias, Dardo and Daniel hanging at café 'Lokos X el Pool'

In this chapter I will elaborate about how urban tribes emerged in Argentina, how youth cultures are formed and how they profile themselves towards the outside world.

For my thesis it is necessary to give basic information about the urban tribes. The purpose of this section is to show who and what the urban tribes are. Urban tribes are often an extension of the in-betweenness of the youth. Teenagers are too young to be treated like adults, but too old to be treated like children, this gives them a sense of not being a part of society. Urban tribes are therefore an important alternative for the teens. Within an urban tribe a person is seen as a whole person and he belongs somewhere (Benson, 2003; Alan France and Sandu, 2007). This is why a lot of teenagers join urban tribes like the skaters or the heavies.

In this section I will talk about the skaters and heavies separately to map both of them and to introduce them. I am first going to explain how they emerged in Argentina. After that, I will give a description of the urban tribes. I will focus on the skaters and the heavies and how the spreading of the tribes throughout the whole country began.

## **2.1 Urban tribes in Argentina**

*Tribus urbanas*, or urban tribes, are a rather new phenomenon in Argentina. The first urban tribes as we know them now emerged in the early 1990's, as also was the case in the rest of the Southern Cone of Latin America. This was, among other things, as a resistance against the economic decline of that area at the time (Caffarelli, 2008, Hoog Antink, 2008). But the tribes were not as big as they are nowadays. In the 2000's with the coming of the internet, the urban tribes began to grow, connecting with people all over the world. Some urban tribes, for example the skaters are straight copies from the United States. Through the internet, Argentinean skaters stay in contact with American skaters.

In the 1960's and '70's there were already subcultures throughout Latin America. In Argentina too, especially in Buenos Aires. These tribes were rather different than the contemporary urban tribes. In the dictatorial times it was even dangerous to belong to a certain subculture, because they were considered 'subversive'. Some hippie and *rock nacional* songs were even banned from the radio as they could 'up rise the youth'<sup>6</sup>. As the matter of fact it could be said that the music raised up the youth, because in Argentina the so called '*rock nacional*', was in fact the base for most of the urban tribes in Argentina.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.detribusurbanas.com.ar](http://www.detribusurbanas.com.ar)

Music is of main importance in the forming of youth subcultures. As Constanza Caffarelli (2008) says: “*Rock nacional* as a movement has nowadays a considerable amount of social importance in the history of Argentina in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Rock constructs ties of identity among the youth, but also a demarcation between them and the adults that did not exist in such explicit way until the moment that this musical genre became important and spread throughout the country. This began in the late 1950’s, following the example of the United States and still goes on nowadays.” (Caffarelli, 2008: 66). Rock was a movement that was used by the youth to gain attention, distinguishing themselves from their parents. It was a rather active movement and in Argentina this also came together with the military dictatorship that started in 1955 and the growing support of Peronism. The urban youth became politically more conscious and started to participate more in society. The youth began to show more resistance towards society, therefore becoming more important (James, 1988: 23). This active movement, propelled by *rock nacional*, was followed up by the more passive and relaxed hippie- movement.

The heavies were born right after the fame of the hippies, in the seventies with the coming of heavy metal. The movement began in the United States, but moved quickly all around the world, and so it came to Argentina. The heavies were formed as a reaction to the hippies’ ‘love and peace- lifestyle’, but also as a more aggressive reaction towards the social problems of the time and to show their discontent towards society. The initial heavies in Argentina started very much underground, as heavy metal did not get played on the radios and the fans had to get the music another way. For example through friends of relatives that emigrated to the United States or Europe (Caffarelli, 2008: 87). The heavies show a lot of similarities with the ‘rockeros’, the followers of *rock nacional*, who never ceased to exist. It could be said that the heavies are a more extreme version of the ‘rockeros’. Their ideologies are about the same, just like the way they dress. The only difference is that the heavies are a bit more exaggerated than the ‘rockeros’ in the way they dress; they tend to overdo it sometimes. Resistance is very important to the urban tribes (Moore, 2007). From my research becomes clear that heavies tend to resist more against society by being as extreme as possible. In their ideologies the heavies also tend to be a little more militant than the ‘rockeros’. They are often activists, most of them are politically left, even though there is also a considerable amount of right wing heavies. What is noticeable is that the heavies are an urban tribe that is an exact copy of the heavy metal- movement in the United States, but in the United States, most of the heavies are right wing, while in Argentina they are most of the time leftists.

Another extreme leftist subculture is that of punk, a movement that started in the late seventies, right after the heavy metal subculture. Punk-related ideologies are mostly concerned with individual freedom and anti-establishment views. Common punk viewpoints include anti-authoritarianism, a DIY ethic, anarchism and not selling out. (Caffarelli, 2008: 99-100). This movement still exists in Argentina, especially through punk rock music. Many contemporary urban tribes use punk rock or the punk- ideologies to identify themselves with, but are less active and extreme than the original punks. One of them is the urban tribe of the skaters. Skating as a subculture originally started in the 1960's in the United States, but did not get to Argentina until the late 1980's and early 1990's.

In 1989 Carlos Menem became president and he gave importance to exporting and importing goods to Argentina, so a lot of people came more in touch with foreign cultures. The skaters got to know skateboarding from the television and started to copy them. The skaters identify with punk rock music, because it is anarchistic, just like they want to profile themselves. At first, skaters were seen as rebellious, non-conforming youths, but American films such as *Grind* and *Lords Of Dogtown*, have helped improve the reputation of skateboarding youth, depicting individuals of this subculture as having a positive outlook on life and engaging in healthy sportsman's competition. Lack of respect, egotism and hostility towards fellow skateboarders is generally frowned upon, albeit the skaters have a firm disrespect for authority and for rules in general.(Caffarelli, 2008: 177-178).

In Tres Arroyos the skating movement started three years ago in 2007, when Matias Lopez, a 27- year old skater who is seen as the 'father' of the Trey Arroyan skaters, became fed up by the fact that there was no place to go for people who liked to skate. There was also hardly any skating- material. He himself had to make his own skateboard in order to be able to skate. So he decided to start a shop dedicated to skaters in Tres Arroyos called 'Iguanos Crazy Shop'. At first there was hardly any interest, but after he started to organize skating events where he invited the Argentinean champion, many kids became enthusiastic. Nowadays Matias has build his own skate park, called 'Iguanos skate park' and he still is the spill of the skating community in Tres Arroyos which has grown a lot during the years.

In the next section, I am going to introduce said skaters to give a clearer view of the urban tribe. This basic information is of use to know where the basis lies in building their identity as a group.

## **2.2 Who are the skaters?**

The skaters in Tres Arroyos are almost always middle or upper class kids who go to school or work. Most of them are boys, the girls that hang with the group are girlfriends or girls that fancy one of the guys. There are a lot of skaters that come and go in the tribe I did research in, but there is a core that always hangs out together and that forms the base of the tribe. The skaters I researched usually hang out at Iguanos- skate park. Other groups hang at the central park (plaza San Martin) or Parque Cabañas, a family park. Another place for the skaters to hang out is 'Iguanos', Matias's skate-shop. There is no exact rivalry among the different skater tribes, but they do not really mix, everybody seems to stay with their tribe. The only way in which the rivalry is made clear is in competitions. Here, the different tribes really compete, this goes hand in hand with name-calling and booing. When the competition is over, though, every bit of hatred seems to go away and they congratulate each other and go their own way.



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<sup>7</sup> Dardo, Ricardo and Matias at Iguanos Skatepark

## **The meaning of looks in identity- building**

*“If shoes are not of the brand Vans, we will not wear them.”*

Dardo

Matias Lopez<sup>8</sup> is the typical skater, he is about 1,78 meters, he wears a baseball cap to the side, has a wide, long T-shirt and wide ¾ - jeans (skate-pants). He also wears clothes, especially shoes, from the brands Vans, Dickies or Sk8. For the skaters their appearance is very important and they have to wear first brand clothing. Girls also wear skate- pants, but they wear tight shirts and have usually long, straight hair. Skaters wear these clothes not only to distinct themselves from the rest of society, but also because it is the most practical clothing to skate.

To create boundaries between the tribe and society, clothing is very important. It is used as a means to resist against the mainstream and for recognition of the group (Moore, 2007). For Matias, as said, certain main brands of clothes are the norm. If skaters do not wear these brands, they sometimes are seen as poseurs<sup>9</sup>. This depends on the position of a person in the group. If, for example Matias would wear second- brand clothing, it is of less importance than if a newer member wears those clothes. A newer member wearing second- brand clothing is more in the position of being frowned upon than a more institutional member as they have proved themselves more than newer members of the urban tribe. The older members are higher up in the hierarchy than the young ones.

## **Hierarchy and status**

Within the skaters I researched, Ricardo Gastelu is clearly the leader, he is the best skater and he decides what the group does. Ricardo is one of the oldest members of the tribe and has won a lot of skating competitions, that is why he has gained respect of his fellow skaters. He comes from an upper-class family who has a lot of fame in Tres Arroyos since they own almost every transport- related plant there and a soccer team. It becomes clear that his wealth has to do with the fact that he is the leader of the tribe as I noticed that he buys a lot of things for his friends, for example the food and drinks that are eaten and drunk while hanging. He is also the one who makes the decisions within the group. In return for his favors loyalty from the other skaters is expected.

Within the skater- tribe, Ricardo is the leader, but for the skaters in general Matias is seen as the überskater. He is the most famous skater of Tres Arroyos and also the one who started the

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<sup>8</sup> Matias Lopez (27) is a skater and owner of skate shop 'Iguanos'

<sup>9</sup> A poseur is someone who, acts like he belongs to an urban tribe, but is actually faking it.

whole skate- phenomenon there by starting 'Iguanos'. The skaters have a lot of respect for him, because if it wasn't for him, a lot of skaters would not even be skaters. Matias is also the one who tries to keep all the skaters together by organizing competitions, skating-conferences, skating-promotions and by building skateparks throughout Tres Arroyos. The respect Matias has is gained, because of what he has done for the skating community in Tres Arroyos. Matias is also the oldest of the skaters.

Skaters are gaining more respect as they get older, because they have more experience in life and skating. It is noticeable that the 'leaders' of the different groups are also the oldest members. They have accomplished more in skating. They won more competitions and know more about the sport.

Respect is also gained with the winning of competitions, because this shows you are a true skater. Ricardo has won almost every competition there was and because of this and his experience within the tribe, his status in the tribe is almost father-like. The younger members come to him for advise about skating and life. They do not show this kind of respect to other members.



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<sup>10</sup> Ricardo at a skating competition he eventually won

## **Gender**

*“Here in Argentina women will always be less important than men. They think we can do less, but we are just as good. Corina and I are the living proof of it, but we will never be seen as equal skaters as Ricardo and his group.”*

Dayana

In Tres Arroyos, most of the skaters are boys. I have seen very few skatergirls that actually skate and those who do are seen as ‘*machona*’, a bit masculine. They are also not really seen as true members, because most of the girls do not skate, but only hang with the tribe. To be a real skater, you have to be able to skate. Skating is seen as something that the guys do. While I stayed in Tres Arroyos, I have never seen a girl participate in a competition and the two girls that actually skate in the skate park are not really part of a tribe. They sometimes hang with them, but most of the time they hang out just by themselves, the skaters seem to exclude girls from participating in their tribe. These gender differences in urban tribes are explained by Frith (1983). For Frith (1983: 223), the starting point for any analysis of the gender differentiation of leisure is the fact that traditionally girls have tended to spend more time at home than boys do. This does not mean that they are excluded from youth culture, just less visible. He places the focus herein in the history of music. In the history of pop and rock as a whole this has often resulted in the construction of the music audience in sexually differentiated terms: males as public performers, females as private consumers. Many researchers, according to Frith (1983), have characterized the private discourse of "girl culture" as "bedroom culture". This is because a dominant theme of popular music has always been love and courtship. Naturally, this is a theme that appeals to both sexes. However, it appears that early adolescent girls have a special relationship with pop in these terms, which explains why the majority of pop artists have been male and why young girls have dominated the "teenybopper" record buying public. This is also one reason why the boys usually participate more in subcultures (they want to be the one the girls admire) and the girls are more or less placed as their admirers.

### **2.3 Who are the heavies?**

Other than the skaters, the heavies are from the working class, most of them work or have left school. Most of them always liked heavy metal all of their lives. The heavies usually hang out at one of the member's house, at café ‘Lokos x el Pool’ or at local concerts. The skaters also hang around at Lokos x el Pool, but the groups do not seem to mix or hang out with each other. The heavy group almost never hangs out all together, they feel more comfortable when there are not so many people around them. They hang out about four days a week, but always

in another combination of people. The heavies talk more when there are less of them, except when they go to concerts. This is a real group event and every member goes. The heavies are called 'heavies' because they listen to heavy metal and follow its lifestyle. The heavy metal lifestyle is a worldwide phenomenon that has its roots in the United States. What inspires the heavies to behave the way they do and to dress the way they do are heavy metal bands like, for example, ACDC, Metallica and Pantera. In Argentina most heavies also listen to Argentine metal bands like Almafuerite, Hermetica, La Renga or Rata Blanca. The bands' attitude is something they admire.



### **The importance of looks in identity- building**

*When I was just a kid and I watched movies, I always wanted to be the bad guy. The one dressed in leather that rides on his motorcycle and does not care about anything, I wanted to be that way. Being a heavy is not about being good (laughs).*

Pablo

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<sup>11</sup> Having dinner at Estefania's house with Edi and my sister Geraldina

Just as for the skaters, appearance is also very important to the heavies, but in another way. Both girls and boys dress like the heavy metal bands; they have long hair, they wear a lot of black, especially bandshirts of Almafuerite and Hermetica. Pablo DelValle<sup>12</sup> is the typical heavy, he is 2 meters tall, only wears bandshirts and denim and he has a motorcycle named Tina, that he loves very much and rides as much as he can, wearing leather clothes. Heavies wear a lot of black leather, this is not only to look tough, but also because it is the only fabric that does not let the wind through when they are riding their motorcycles.

To the skaters it is more their appearance that is important, to the heavies, image is very important. The long hair and clothes are to distinct themselves from the ‘mainstream- society’ (Caffarelli, 2008; Moore, 2007).

Pablo, for example has very short, trimmed hair. The other heavies used to tease him about this, saying that he had become ‘plain’. But when Pablo told them he served for the military where the hair has to be short, they stopped teasing him, as he now was seen as a though soldier. This is an example of how image is of importance to the heavies, they have to appear though (Caffarelli, 2008).

Like Pablo, the heavies also have a lot of tattoo’s. Tattoo’s and heavies seem to go hand in hand, and there are no heavies without tattoo’s, because without tattoo’s a heavy is no heavy. Pablo is a tattoo- artist and he says he has tattooed almost every heavy in Tres Arroyos. Like Pablo already said above, heavies like to see themselves as the ‘bad guys’ of society, that is why they dress in black a lot and have a lot of, for example skull- prints. Being the bad guy to them is not being a criminal, but it is more about being honest and not being liked because of that. The heavies are not the most loved group of people, because of the way they dress and because if they do not like a person, they will tell that to his face. Because of this, a lot of heavies get in fights often. Pablo says people on the streets a lot of times think that he wants to fight them because of the way he looks, while this is actually not the case. Heavies are calm people, unless they are being provoked.

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<sup>12</sup> Pablo DelValle (25) is a heavy and motoquero (motorcycle- fan), in his daily life he is a beekeeper and a tattoo-artist.



13

### **Heavies and motorcycles**

*My motorcycle is an extension of my body. I see my motorcycle as a metaphor for life. If you keep it in control, you'll have the best time, if you lose control, it can kill you."*

Pablo

What seems very important in the life of the heavies are motorcycles. Therefore they are also called 'motoqueros'. Almost every heavy I met had a motorcycle. Pablo said that the obsession with motorcycles comes from the obsession with freedom. If you ride a bike you are free to go wherever you want to. Heavies from all around Argentina organize motorcycle meetings where they talk about their hobby, compare motorcycles and listen to metal. The motorcycle is also a status symbol. The real heavies have so called 'touring motors', these are the very big shiny motors. Choppers are also allowed among the 'real' heavies. There is a big rivalry between the heavies that ride touring or choppers bikes and the ones who ride crossbikes. No one I asked could tell me why, they all told me they just think differently. I do know that heavies who ride touring bikes see themselves as more real than *motoqueros* who ride crossbikes. This is because in Tres Arroyos there are a lot of people that ride crossbikes around town, so it is not as special as riding a touring bike. Everyone can ride

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<sup>13</sup> Pablo tattooing Ezequiel, another heavy

a motorcycle, but that does not make them a heavy, there are a lot of other aspects that someone has to have.

The biggest motorcycle club of Tres Arroyos is 'Alas de la Libertad' and almost every heavy with a motorcycle I met was a member of this club. Jose 'Pepe' Megna, the president of this motorcycle club for a very long time, is also known throughout Tres Arroyos for what he has done for the *motoqueros* in Tres Arroyos. He has had a radio program about motorcycles and heavy metal, but he retired from it. Pepe is seen as the main *motoquero* in Tres Arroyos, since he has been a heavy all his life and has done a lot for them. Pepe said a real heavy has a motorbike. There are heavies that do not have a motorbike, but most of them do. There is no particular rivalry between heavies with and without motors. It is not so that someone is less a heavy if he has not got a motorcycle, unlike what Pepe said.



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## **Gender**

In comparison to the skaters, the heavies are more gender- mixed. There are more males, but there are also some females that are seen as true members of the tribe and that participate with activities. They go on motor- tours with the men and go to concerts and festivals with them. There are in comparison very little female members than there are male members, this too is

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<sup>14</sup> Hundreds of motorcycles at the annual motorcycle meeting in Florida, Buenos Aires

according to Frith's (1983) theory as explained earlier. Deena Weinstein(2000) even argues that heavy metal has outlasted many other rock genres largely due to the emergence of an intense, exclusionary, strongly masculine subculture. Because the metal fanbase is largely young, white, male, and blue-collar, the group is "tolerant of those outside its core demographic base who follow its codes of dress, appearance, and behavior" (Weinstein, 2000: 102-103). Because of the protective nature of men, she states, the metal scene is kept alive, by excluding those who are not like them.

This is not exactly the case within my research population, because there are more and more female members and they are not being excluded, they are welcomed. It is true that the heavies are very protective of their tribe, but this also goes for the skaters and other urban tribes.

### **3: Tribelife**

In this chapter I am going to take a deeper look into the daily lives of the skaters and the heavies. It can somewhat be seen as an extension of the first chapter as it shows how the basic information given in the last chapter, is being put into practice. The purpose of this section is to describe how the skaters and heavies function as a group. I will do this by talking about how they mark their borders of being a skater or heavy. I also want to make clear what it means to belong in the tribe to the members. Or with other words: how the tribe gives meaning to their daily life. What is important in this chapter is how identity coincides with subculture. Group identities are formed by processes of *othering*. With this boundaries are made between the *ingroup*, in this case the urban tribe, and the *outgroup*, in this case society. The *outgroup* is defined as something that the *ingroup* is not, hereby creating it as the *other* (Ghorashi, 2003, Chrysochoou, 2004).

I am starting by elaborating on resistance as one of the main influences of becoming an urban tribe. Later I will describe the inside of the urban tribes as I will talk about symbols, rituals and loyalty.

#### **3.1: Resistance and boundaries**

*“The mainstream is society in its whole. Our parents, teachers, bosses and everyone who conforms to it. We do not ever want to become that way, that is why we behave the way we do”*

Ricardo

The mainstream, as explained by Ricardo, is to the urban tribes the above mentioned *other*. It is the *outgroup*, that has been given all negative characteristics by the urban tribes and is seen as something they do not want to belong to (Chrysochoou, 2004). Rebelling to their parents and teachers is used to make a boundary between their tribe and the mainstream. If you conform to the mainstream, you cannot be part of the urban tribe. This is the case with almost every type of youth culture (Bennett, 2000: 3).

Both the skaters as the heavies tend to rebel a lot against society. Both of the groups think that it is not fair how in Argentina the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Ezequiel<sup>15</sup> told me: “In Argentina nowadays everybody steals: there are thieves everywhere. But the biggest thieves are the politicians who do nothing to help the situation.” Youth subcultures often emerge as a reaction to this world or the so called ‘mainstream’. As stated in

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<sup>15</sup> Ezequiel Madsen (21) is a heavy who is very much involved in politics. He is a member of the Young Peronists.

the theoretic framework, the youth suffers from so-called in-betweenness and uniting against the mainstream gives them a feeling of being a whole person (Benson, 2003; Alan France and Sandu, 2007). Of great importance is what other groups think about them. They both want to create a certain image with the way they look and behave and they want to appeal a certain way for the mainstream.

Sometimes other groups are seen as the mainstream too. This is another kind of boundary the urban tribes make: the definition of other urban tribes and groups as the *other*. For example, I had an interview with Cristian, one of the last *floggers*<sup>16</sup>. He told me that actually nobody took the floggers seriously as a group. Everyone saw them as upperclass kids with too much time on their hands. People like the *floggers* are exactly to whom the heavies and skaters refer as the mainstream. But the skaters and heavies see each other as the mainstream as well. For the heavies this is more the case than for the skaters. The relationship between the skaters and heavies in their way is practically nonexistent. They are two completely different groups who do not interfere. To the heavies, the skaters are definitely the mainstream. They see them as rich kids who try to act tough, but in fact are not. They do not like them, because they wear expensive clothes and like to show off a lot. When I told Juan Cruz<sup>17</sup> I was also doing research on the skaters, he said to me: “The skaters? I hope you know it is just a trend the rich kids follow to pass their time. And like any other trend, this one shall pass too”

On the other hand, the skaters also have their opinion about the heavies. I could tell from the ways they talked about them, that they find them intimidating, but also fascinating. The skaters think the heavies do not treat people right and that they are rude. But on the other hand they think they are cool, riding their motorcycles. No skater has literally said to me that they like the heavies, but the way they speak about them shows that they do admire them a little. An example of this can be that the last weeks I was in Tres Arroyos, the skaters started to use words the heavies normally use. Like ‘*zarpado*’ instead of ‘cool’.

It is typical that both groups consider each other as the mainstream or the ones who are ‘not like them’, because both groups react to the mainstream in their own way, they create their own boundaries. In the youth culture debate it becomes clear that there are certain profiles that people must fit in to, before they can participate in a certain subculture (Benson, 2003; Bennett, 2000). The skaters do not fit into the heavies’ profile and vice versa. This has to do with the way the teens were brought up and to which social class they belong. The social class

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<sup>16</sup> The floggers in Tres Arroyos are nowadays practically extinct, although there are some of them left in Buenos Aires. Cristian Suarez is one of the remaining floggers inters Arroyos.

<sup>17</sup> Juan Cruz Zubillaga (20), heavy

paints their view on the outside world. What is noticeable is that both of the groups have similar ideologies: they see themselves as rebels of society and are both Peronistas. This is striking due to the fact that the skaters are higher middle class, and the Peronistas traditionally support the working class.

### **Peronism: political resistance**

*If You love Argentina, you love Perón*

Estefania

As stated above, both of the groups consider themselves Peronistas. Being Peronista means being a supporter of the Partido Justicialista, founded by the late general Juan Domingo Peron. Being Peronista in a town like Tres Arroyos is not very common, as Tres Arroyos is a very rural town and most of the inhabitants are so-called '*Radicales*'. These are members of the Union Civica Radical, the other of the two political parties in Argentina, next to the PJ. The UCR's positions on issues range from liberal to social democratic and have a lot of followers in the rural areas, as their focus lies on those areas too. Tres Arroyos is an agricultural city and the Peronistas are a minority, since they tend to discriminate the rural areas. Being Peronista is thus also a way to rebel against the *Radical* ideas most of the people in Tres Arroyos have; it is a way to be different than the rest. In Tres Arroyos Peronistas are being frowned upon, because they do not support the agriculture. A Tresarroyan man once told me: "The Peronistas are the reason this country is the way it is. They support the thieves and deliberately discriminate the *campo*."

The heavies call themselves Peronista, because they belong to the working class and they relate to the original ideas the Peronist party had. The working class identity is very important for the heavies, because to them it marks what their roots are. Their parents and forefathers were the one who built Argentina and they are proud of it. The original ideas of the Peronist Party are, among others, a strong centralized government with authoritarian tendencies. Freedom from foreign influences. A third way approach to economics which purported to be neither socialist nor capitalist, but to incorporate elements of both in a corporatist manner. And the combination of nationalism and social democracy (James, 1988: 21).

The heavies call themselves Peronista, but they still criticize the government who nowadays, as the matter of fact is Peronista. A lot of heavies say that the Peronistas are not what they used to be and that the government as it is now has nothing to do with the original Peronism.

Estefania<sup>18</sup> told me: “Peronism does not exist anymore, what we have now is completely different. You can see how it drags the country down. What we have to do is go back to the Peronista- roots and you shall see it will be better.”

Heavies define their politic identity as something patriotic. It is not so that the heavies are political activists, they seem to have a strong opinion about how things roll in Argentina, but they do not do anything about the situation. They are most of the times Peronistas, because of their parents, because being Peronista is a sort of tradition in Argentina that goes on from generation to generation. So if the parents are Peronista, the children most of the time are too. As the matter of fact the parents of all the members of the heavies I researched were Peronista too. Agustin<sup>19</sup> told me: “Yes my parents are both Peronistas, and you can say that they raised me to be one too. But now I am older I can think for myself and I am still Peronista, but it is because I chose to be one.”

For the skaters politic -related things are not as important as is the case for the heavies. Javier even jokingly told me: “Politics are for people who take themselves too seriously. What I want is total anarchy.” The skaters do call themselves Peronistas, but do this, because the Peronistas are seen as the traditional political rebels. The skaters’ parents, often radicals, expect them to be radical too, so to rebel to them, they become left- wing Peronistas. They see the parents as the mainstream, and so they resist to them.

The skaters do not do so much with their political identity. Some of them call themselves anarchists, but this is only because it stands for not having any rules. Ezequiel<sup>20</sup> said to me: “No, I actually do not know the correct principals of Peronism or anarchism for that matter. I actually just like to draw the anarchist sign everywhere I can.” The skaters, as becomes clear from this quote, are not all that interested in politics, they discuss political issues only when unavoidable.

For the heavies, this is most certainly not the case. Most of the heavies are from the working class and Peron and Evita are still important to them for what they have done for the workers. Some of the heavies are even members of the *‘Jovenes Peronistas’*, the Peronista youth movement. On March 29<sup>th</sup> 2010 Nestor Kirchner went to visit Tres Arroyos, and I went to see him with a couple of heavies. Nestor Kirchner is the husband of the current President of Argentina, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, and a well-known member of the Peronist Party. I noticed that even though the heavies are not happy with the way Cristina rules the country,

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<sup>18</sup> Estefania Soriano is a heavy and a very fanatical Peronista

<sup>19</sup> Agustin Lozano is a heavy who grew up in one of the worst neighborhoods in Tres Arroyos.

<sup>20</sup> Ezequiel Giordano is a skater from a wealthy family

they still cheered, beat drums, waved flags and sang the Peronista- hymn as if Peron himself was speaking to them. Estefania later said to me: “The Peronista- ideologies really brings us (the heavies –JK) together, because we can relate to their working class- ideas and we really want to believe that society can change the way we want to. Even though, off course I know that this will not happen.” Sebastian<sup>21</sup> added to this: “We do not know if the change will happen or not. We have to continue supporting the Peronistas and be anti- *Radical*, even though the rest looks weirdly at us. I know it will end well. We are what we are and we will continue to make a difference.” Here it becomes clear that the *Radicales* and the upper classes are being made into the ‘*other*’, as is explained in the theory. Because the heavies are from the working or lower class, which is sometimes excluded from the dominant classes and are seen by them as ‘problematic’, they create a feeling of ‘us’ against ‘them’(Chrysochoou, 2000). Being Peronista helps them to live with this feeling as it gives the heavies a feeling that they are actually doing something against ‘them’, in this case the *Radicales* and the higher classes.



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<sup>21</sup> Sebastian Martin, heavy

<sup>22</sup> Argentinean flags waving at Nestor Kirchner, a prominent member of the Peronista Party

## **Looks to rebel**

*“ You just have to stand out to get noticed and your exterior is the most obvious part to begin with. Looks are a huge part of someone’s identity, it is a big part of who you are. If you, wearing your leather, go to an office and stand between the people in suit, everyone will certainly recognize you, and not the suits.”*

Andrea

Another way to be different than the rest and thus resist against the mainstream is by the way the urban tribes look (Moore, 2007: Benson, 2003). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the skaters and heavies not only wear clothes to look different than everybody else, but also because it is the most practical thing to wear. Skaters use three-quarter pants, because otherwise, their pants will be stuck between the wheels of their skateboard. Heavies wear a lot of leather, because of the fact that they ride a lot on their motorbikes and leather is the only material that keeps them warm while riding. It can thus be said that the urban tribes combine the practical with freaky.

Their looks are also a way to create a boundary with the mainstream. The urban tribes deliberately dress different from the rest to emphasize the ‘us’ against ‘them’- feeling they have with the mainstream. When I asked Sebastian what he thought about the mainstream, he answered: “ I never want to be considered normal. I never want to cut my hair, I will never wear a suit and I certainly do not want a normal family. It is just not me.”

It could be said that resistance against the mainstream plays a big part in building an identity, and as Andrea<sup>23</sup> already made clear, the easiest way to do this is through your looks. The way the urban tribes look, creates an instant boundary as everybody can see that they belong to a certain group, not to the mainstream.

The mainstream, in this case, is defined differently per situation. It could be their parents, teachers, people from the upper classes. It especially means the people who in one way or another conform to what society says they should do (Moore, 2007). The skaters and heavies see themselves as nonconformists: society does not tell them what to do.

With the way they look they confirm the fact that they are not common and that they are a group apart from the mainstream. I also heard a lot of times that the way they look is a way to express themselves, they want people to know who they are. ‘If you dress like everybody else nobody will notice you, but if you dress in leather, people recognize you and you draw attention on yourself. In a small town like Tres Arroyos people will frown upon that, but it is

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<sup>23</sup> Andrea Tumini, is the owner of ACME comics. She used to own Bunker, an alternative clothing store where all the urban tribes of Tres Arroyos gathered. Andrea has done a lot to keep the urban tribes together but did not succeed, as there are hardly any urban tribes left in Tres Arroyos and Bunker had to be closed down. Andrea used to be a punk throughout her whole life.

never wrong to cause some trouble with the way you look once in a while’, said Andrea to me. The ‘people’ Andrea talks about are defined as the above mentioned mainstream, the ‘good guys’ of society, who dress with the latest fashion and follow the trends. Scholars in the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies have seen subcultures as enclaves of resistance to “hegemony,” a form of covert opposition to the taken-for-granted ideologies embedded in symbols, rituals, and popular culture (Benson, 2003: 33-34 and Moore, 2007: 438). Boundaries are created against the adult corporate world. This is of importance when it comes identifying with the group: they are different than that world.



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<sup>24</sup> Ezequiel’s twin brother Fernando, Sebastian, Ezequiel and Daniela posing

### **3.2: Codes, Symbolism and rituals: how identity is constructed from the inside**

*“Soy el que nunca aprendió/ desde que nació/ cómo debe vivir el humano/ llegué tarde, el sistema ya estaba enchufado /así funcionando”.*<sup>25</sup>

La Renga- El Rebelde (theme song for the heavies)

The symbolism and rituals, that Benson (2003) and Moore (2007) talk about, are of great importance for the skaters and heavies. With the symbols and rituals, the groups try to create boundaries as they use them as something typical of their group. Other people do not know them, and are excluded from the group. The groups also use the rituals to bond with each other. The concerts are a true bonding experience for the heavies, as is going on internet-forums after band-practice for the skaters. These activities are done together as a group and create harmony among the members. The skaters, next to going on the internet after band practice, also have handsigns, common signs, an own lingo, and skating- competitions as rituals. The heavies, next to going to concerts and all the rituals therein, also have handsigns and common signs. They also go to motorcycle- conventions and get tattooed on special occasions.

Another form of creating not only a personal identity, but more of a group identity is the tradition of having a theme song. The heavies I hung out with have their own ‘theme-song’ too. It is ‘El Rebelde’ by Argentinean heavy metal band La Renga. This song always has to be played and sung really loud. The fact that they claim this song as theirs, also shows how music can bond and really speak for a certain group as will become clear later on in this thesis in chapter 4.

The most prominent symbols are actually the handsigns<sup>26</sup>. What I did notice was the fact that the ‘rock on’- or corna- sign (a fist with the index finger and the pinky sticking out like horns) was used a lot among the heavies. This sign is used when something is really ‘cool’, during concerts or while headbanging, (moving your head up and down heavily on the rhythm of heavy metal while waving your hair). But there are a lot of other hand signs and codes. Among the skaters, for example, the sign that is used the most is ‘todo lindo- sign’. This is a fist with the thumb and pinky sticking out. To do it well, the wrist has to be turned back and forward. This sign is very positive and it means everything is going fine. It is mostly used while on the skateboard. It is important to know when to use the signs, because you will be

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<sup>25</sup> **Translation:** *I am the one that never learned, from the day he was born, how human beings should live. I came too late, the system was already plugged in and functioning in this way*

<sup>26</sup> Illustrations of these handsigns can be found in annex 2

laughed at and not be taken seriously if you use a sign on a wrong moment. You will probably be seen as a poseur.

While at concerts there are also codes that are typical for heavies. Attendees of metal concerts do not, for example, dance in the usual sense; Deena Weinstein (2000) has argued that this is due to the music's largely male audience and "extreme heterosexualist ideology." She identifies two primary body movements that substitute for dancing: headbanging and an arm thrust that is both a sign of appreciation and a rhythmic gesture. The performance of air guitar is popular among metal fans both at concerts and listening to records at home. Other concert audience activities include stage diving, crowd surfing, pushing and shoving in a chaotic mêlée called *moshing*, and displaying the corna hand symbol (Weinstein, 2000:167- 168) . What is also a prominent symbol among the heavies is the so- called '*as de espadas*' This is a Spanish playing card that is similar to the ace of spades in poker cards. This card stands for victory and knowledge and as a reminder that life is a game. The one who obtains the card while playing *truco*<sup>27</sup> wins the game. The heavies draw this symbol a lot and use the card as a good luck charm. The *as de espadas* became important to the heavies when Ricardo Iorio, lead singer of metal group Almafuerite, wrote a song about it.

Something that is typical for both of the groups is that they think that talking like the television show 'The Simpsons' is something typical for their group, while this is clearly not the case. Both of the tribes stay home to watch it and later they discuss the episodes, even though they have already seen every one of them. When the members of the tribe talk to each other, they use a lot of words or phrases used by Bart Simpson or they imitate Ned Flanders. For the skaters the Simpsons are of importance, because for them Bart Simpson is the ultimate skater. He is a free spirit who never grows up, like to cause trouble and plays by his own rules. The skaters like to think that they are all a little bit like Bart Simpson and that they will always be that kind of a rebel. Bart Simpson is, according to Matias, also the one who made skateboarding famous across the world.

The heavies like The Simpsons, because it goes against all the rules of what cartoons are. What they like about it is that it is about an average working class family who looks and acts totally different than the average family. They also like the 'smart' jokes that are made.

### **3.3: Loyalty: group identity building by exclusion**

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<sup>27</sup> *Truco* is a traditional Argentinean card game often played at parties, it is played with Spanish cards

*It is an average day at Iguanos skatepark. Ricardo, Dardo, Ezequiel and Facundo are skating at the ramp, while me and Viviana hang out next to them. When the guys take a break from skating, a young unknown boy steps on the ramp and starts skating. After watching him for a couple of minutes Dardo yells at him: "Hey, who are you? You know you are skating on our territory here don't you?" The boy continues skating as if he did not hear Dardo. "Hey, kid, Who are you, have you heard me?", yelled Dardo louder. The kid stopped skating, walked off the ramp and walked towards us. "This skate-park is ours, if you want to skate here, you can at least introduce yourself to us.", said Dardo. "This is a public place and I can be here if I want to. Oh, and my name is Kevin and I am fourteen years old, can I skate now?", answered the boy. "No, no, because this skate-park is ours, you have to answer a couple of questions first, in order to skate." "Ehm, ok", said the boy hesitantly, "but why is this your skate-park, then?" "Because we know Matias, now what is your favourite band?", said Ezequiel. "Ehm, I like Viejas Locas, Kapanga, 2 Minutos, and bands like that.", said Kevin. "Ok, those are great bands! Hard or soft wheels?", continued Dardo. "Hard wheels." "Aren't you a little young for hard wheels?", said Ezequiel, "Ok, you seem cool enough, you can skate on our ramp, but when we want to skate again, you have to let us on the ramp." Kevin confirmed and went away to skate. "So, he seems like a nice kid, can he now hang out with you?", I asked. On which Dardo answered: "No way, he wears Toppers instead of Vans."*

The situation elaborated above shows how difficult it is to get into an urban tribe. There are some rules and codes that are unwritten, but still are taken seriously. People have to look a certain way, wear the 'right' type of clothes, like the 'right' kind of music, or have the 'right' kind of interest. What is 'right' differs per tribe, but if you do not have the 'right' kind of qualities, you cannot become a full member of an urban tribe (Roe, 1999; Caffarelli, 2008). For example as is explained above, to be an Iguanos-skatepark skater, you have to wear clothes by the brand Vans, you have to like punk rock, especially the bands 2 Minutos, Los Violadores or Negocio Religioso, you have to call yourself Peronista and your main interest has to be skateboarding and you have to buy your equipment at Iguanos. These rules are made to be sure that the right people get in to your tribe.

The urban tribes do not like poseurs and the rules are there to prevent the poseurs from entering the tribe. It is also a way to create an *ingroup*. The urban tribe is the *ingroup*, the rest the *outgroup*. Not everybody can enter the *ingroup*, that is why they are being excluded by the

rules and codes. Excluding the ‘*others*’ also makes the group tighter, because it is literally ‘us’ against ‘them’. Excluding the ‘*others*’ is thus a big part of creating a group identity (Chrysochoou, 2004: 28; Ghorashi, 2003).

Within the groups there are also other codes that have to do with loyalty towards the group. With both the urban tribes it is important to know where you belong. For example, you do not share your motorbike- knowledge with another motor gang, you do not mess with each other’s girlfriend, and if you are an ‘Iguanos- skatepark- skater’ you do not skate at the Plaza San Martin. The loyalty comes to the surface, because nobody seems to have friends outside the urban tribe and when they do, the tribe does not like that person, just because he or she is not ‘one of them’. It looks like having friends outside the tribe is seen as a treason against the tribe. Everything has to be kept within the group.

Loyalty can also be created by giving the group things in order to get respect and loyalty. As I said before with the skaters, Ricardo buys a lot of things for the others and is on his turn the leader of the tribe. People stay loyal to him, because he gives. This is the same with Matias, he is the owner of Iguanos and therefore the skaters want to keep him as a friend, so they hang out a lot in Iguanos and call themselves the Iguanos- skaters. But loyalty lies not only in material things, it is an imaginary bond between the members of the urban tribes that keeps them together. It means being there for each other when the other needs it and not treason that person or the tribe. This bond is made firmer by traditions within the tribe.

What is obviously very important in the daily life of the urban tribes are their social contacts. Without those social contacts, there would not be an urban tribe. Social networks are built by mutual interests and interdependency (Frith, 1983: 14). The heavies’ most influential interest is heavy metal, for the skaters this is skating. But it is not just those interests, there are some rules in them. As said before, you have to like the ‘right’ things. To hang out with the heavies, you have to like metal, but only certain types of metal. You have to like motorcycles, but not crossbikes. You have to wear bandshirts from the right bands and so forth. And you have to like those things from your childhood onward.

Most of the heavies are friends since their childhood or early teens. The heavy tribe I researched, is slightly older than usual urban tribes are and for most of them it was their love for metal that brought them together. In middle school they were the ‘outcasts’, because they liked something else than the usual ‘*cumbia*’ or other Latin music. Because of this, their friendship grew and their anti- social attitude towards other people too. Heavies do not usually like people that are not into metal or motorcycles. This is not because they do not respect them, but it is a defense mechanism against the rejection they have already witnessed in

school. Questions can be raised about if this is why there are internet-based heavies. Internet plays a big role in the lives of the heavies, this could be because they do not like to be among people. Most of the heavies are kind of solitary too, they like to be on their own.

When they hang out with their tribe, though, they do act social. They like to have fun, play and make music and talk a lot.

The metal scene has been characterized as a "subculture of alienation", with its own code of authenticity that I will explain further in chapter 5. This code puts several demands on performers: they must appear both completely devoted to their music and loyal to the subculture that supports it; they must appear disinterested in mainstream appeal and radio hits; and they must never "sell out". For members of the tribes, the code promotes "opposition to established authority, and separateness from the rest of society" (Weinstein, 2000: 189).

The skaters on the other hand, have their own code of authenticity. To the skaters skating is the most important thing. But this does not mean that you can call yourself a skater if you know how to skate. You have to follow certain rules and behave a certain way. The skaters are much more open as a group than the heavies. Maybe this is, because they are younger. When they hang out, they hang out in large groups and people are welcome to hang out with them. This does not mean that somebody is instantly their friend or a member of the urban tribe, but they are more open to new people than the heavies. They do not have the 'childhood friend- code' the heavies seem to have. Most of the skaters have become skaters while hanging out with Matias or other skaters. Before the coming of Iguanos, there were not even real skaters as they did not have the equipment, they only had the interest.

### **3.4: Subconclusion**

The previous chapters 'Who are the urban tribes?' and 'Tribelife' have shown in what way urban tribes are constructed and how they maintain themselves by using bonding mechanisms. Resistance against the mainstream is, next to the stage of in-betweenness of the youth the most important factor in the formation of the tribes. It can be said that the resistance comes forth from their in- between stage in a society that does not know where they belong. The resistance can be done in a lot of ways, the most obvious way is by looking a certain way. With this resistance boundaries are created against the outside world. Not everybody can be a member, and this idea fortifies the urban tribe from within, as they form a front against the rest. This feeling is also amplified by certain rituals, codes and symbolism that benefit the construction of a strong group identity.

In the next chapter, I am going to talk about the connection of both urban tribes with music. The most important factor herein is how they construct a group identity and how music helps to keep the tribe alive.



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<sup>28</sup> Dardo, Daniel and Javier hanging with a couple of other kids who are not part of the tribe

<sup>29</sup> Heavies rocking out at a metal concert, doing the corn- sign while headbanging

## **4. Music: an extension of the soul**

During my field work, it became very clear that the most important aspects for the urban tribes was music. When I asked Agustin what he feels when he listens to heavy metal, he answered: “Have you ever sat at home on your own and listened to your favorite piece of music? Have you felt the need to turn up the volume that extra notch, knowing that you shouldn’t because it could damage your ears or annoy the neighbors? And have you then felt free because you identify with the music coming out of the speakers. Enjoyed that tingle down your spine when the chosen track reaches its climax and been overwhelmed by an incredible sense of joy, understanding the energy and sadness? If your answer is yes then hopefully your understanding of what goes through my head and is conjured in my brain when I listen to metal.”

In this chapter I will discuss this most important common denominator. What does music means to the skaters and heavies and why does it means that much to them?

I want to explain why it is music that usually brings an urban tribe together and not something else: what it is that makes music so important to both urban tribes? In the theoretical framework is stated that music is not simply a static cultural object which is produced and consumed, but an active code of resistance and a template which is used for the formation of new forms of individual and collective identity (Stokes, 1994: 91). Stokes (1994) also states that it is the so- called ‘music experience’ that can make an urban tribe, because it brings a subculture together to bond. I want to elaborate how the tribes give meaning to the lyrics of certain groups, as this is one of the most important factors of the ‘music experience’. The lyrics make the urban tribes identify with the music. In the last paragraph I will elaborate on how music can be used as a means to resist to the mainstream. The purpose of this is to make clear how this resistance is used to create a personal or group- identity.

### **4.1: Why music?**

*“Metal is a way of life, we breathe metal. When I have kids, I want them all to listen to metal and my grandkids too.”*

Agustin

Music, as stated above, is very important for both urban tribes, it can even be said that it is the most important aspect of the tribes. As Caffarelli (2008) states in her research on Argentinean urban tribes: music is one of the oldest forms of human communication, a human universal to

be found in all cultures at all times, it is in many ways the most global aspect of the "global village". Music has many facets and many uses, but it is generally acknowledged that its primary appeal is to the emotions. As hymn, national anthem, love song, or political protest song, music may provoke feelings of religiosity, patriotism, romance or revolt. As an extension of these emotions most Argentinean urban tribes form their identity (Caffarelli, 2008: 12). Even though some researchers state that the internet is slowly replacing music as most important aspect in the formation of urban tribes (eg. Williams, 2006; Turkle, 1995 and Hutchinson, 2000), this is clearly not the case in Tres Arroyos. As will be elaborated further on in this thesis, the internet is gaining ground, especially with the heavies, that have formed a sort of internet- urban tribe of net- heavies. To them the internet is certainly replacing the music- aspect, but to the urban tribes I hung out with in Tres Arroyos, music laid the basis for the tribe. As Juan Cruz told me: "without heavy metal we were not heavies, so without music we are nothing but a group of friends."

When I asked Ricardo what music meant to him he said: "Oh, my music is everything to me, without my cd's, mp3-player and my band, I literally think I would die." As comes forth from this very heated quotes, both tribes seem to live for their music. Both skaters and heavies listen to music every day for various hours. The skaters listen to music at home, in the streets on their mp3-players and they have put a cd- player at the skate-park, so they can listen to it while skating. Apart from that, some skaters play in a band and they practice two or three times a week and play shows every once in a while. The heavies listen to the same amount of music as the skaters do. They too, listen several hours a day and play in bands. The big difference between the tribes is that the heavies go to concerts way more often than the skaters do. Every one or two weeks they go to small shows in the vicinity of Tres Arroyos to see unknown metal bands. To see a famous band, they will travel for days. But the famous bands they like do not perform as much as they want them to.

Both skaters and heavies choose to like the type of music that fits best with their personalities. Skaters usually listen to punk rock and heavies to metal. As Ricardo said to me: "Punk is like us: fast and raw."

All in all, music is important for both urban tribes, because it gives the teens a voice with which they can speak out towards society and the mainstream. They use the music to rebel against the 'other' that is the mainstream and to form a group identity, using music as a bonding mechanism.

## **4.2: Lyrics and Rebellion**

*Trabajo duro, muy poca paga/ Desocupados, no pasa nada/ En donde esta, bestias, la igualdad deseadas?/ Yo no quiero represión/ Detestamos la represión/ Nos burlamos de la represión/ Yo no quiero represión<sup>30</sup>*

Los Violadores- Represión

Both the skaters and the heavies see their music a way to rebel against society. The lyrics of both metal and punk are very critical about society. According to Simon Frith (1978: 109), music is an essential component of many contemporary youth cultures. Especially themes linked to the content of the music are important when it comes to discussing the relation between youth cultures and music. My research has confirmed this theory by Frith (1978), because it is not only the way music sounds that makes it appealing for the teens, even though it is the first thing the teens notice. The lyrics that are sung are also very important. Most of the lyrics tell the stories the urban tribes stand for. Javier stated: “By listening to the lyrics of our music, we can give our opinion without even speaking; the music speaks for us and we agree. We can criticize the government, make fun of the police, call politicians names. All just by singing along with our music” What Javier said is indeed important to the urban tribes, because many lyrics are very critical towards society, music is used as a way to rebel against it. Like Stokes (1994) stated, it is because of this that for many urban tribes music is the most important factor: it is a way to rebel to your parents, the government and the police. Examples of this are lyrics by Argentine punk band 2 Minutos from their song ‘ Gatillo Facil’:

*Un gatillo fácil siempre se puede encontrar  
en una esquina, en cualquier lugar.  
Por eso acordate cuando vas a salir,  
que en está selva no se puede dormir.*

*Una bala se escapó, la tiro ese señor  
que estaba justo ahí disfrazado de azul<sup>31</sup>.*

Themes like repression, not caring, the government, society, capitalism, communism and unemployment are often used in punk-rock songs. Their message is often that the people do not have to conform to how society is, rebel against the upper classes, that the world is unfair and they have to start a riot. These are also elements that come to the surface in the forming of

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<sup>30</sup> **Translation:** *Hard work, very little payment/ unoccupied, nothing happens/ Wherein lies, you beasts, the desired equality?/ I do not want repression/we detest repression/we mock repression/I do not want repression*

<sup>31</sup> **Translation:** *an easy trigger can always be found/ on a street corner, in every place/ that is why you got to remember when you go out/ that you cannot sleep in this jungle.  
A bullet has escaped, it was shot by that man/who was just there, dressed in blue*

youth cultures in general, rebelling against society is one of the most important factors in that (Moore, 2007).

The rebellion against upper class society or the mainstream is described in the song 'La Rubia Tarada' from rockband Sumo, a song especially the heavies identify with:

*Caras conchetas, miradas berretas  
y hombres encajados en Fiorucci.  
Oigo "dame" y "quiero" y "no te metas"  
"Te gustó el nuevo Bertolucci?".*

*La rubia tarada, bronceada, aburrida,  
me dice "Por qué te pelaste?"  
Y yo "Por el asco que da tu sociedad.  
Por el pelo de hoy ¿cuánto gastaste?"*

*Un pseudo punkito, con el acento finito  
quiere hacerse el chico malo.  
Tuerce la boca, se arregla el pelito,  
se toma un trago y vuelve a Belgrano<sup>32</sup>.*

The skaters listen to rock and punk- rock mostly, but some heavies like punk too. Ironically, most of the skaters come from the middle or upper class, so it is arguable if they indeed want to change society, even though they say they do. When I talked to them about this subject, nobody seemed to have a clear answer to it. Most of the skaters tried to avoid the subject, others said they certainly wanted to share everything they had with everyone and that they did not care about material things.

Both urban tribes take the lyrics of their music very seriously and identify with what is said. The metal songs the heavies listen to, also have a strong message against society, the mainstream and the government. Especially songs from the band A.N.I.M.A.L. (which stands for: *Acosados Nuestros Indios Murieron Al Luchar*<sup>33</sup>). Most lyrics of the band deal with issues of ethnic minorities and indigenous people of Latin America; witnessed by song titles such as *Sólo Por Ser Indios* ("Only For Being Indian"), *Guerra De Razas* ("Race War"), *Poder Latino* ("Latin Power") and *Raza Castigada* ("Punished Race"). But there are also a lot of

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<sup>32</sup> **Translation:** *Snobby faces, hostile looks/and men embedded in Fiorucci/I hear: 'give me', 'I want' and 'do not meddle'/' Did you like the new Bertolucci?'  
The stupid, tanned, boring blonde said to me/ 'Why did you shave your head?'/ And I: 'because of the disgust your society gives me/ On today's hair, how much did you spent?'*

*A pseudo- punk with a posh accent/ wants to be a bad boy/ he twists his mouth/ fixes his hair/ drinks a gulp/ and returns to Belgrano (an upper class neighborhood in Buenos Aires (-JK))*

<sup>33</sup> **Translation:** *Harassed, Our Indians Died While Fighting*

songs about personal suffering, pain, hostility, anger, death and myths. An example of this is this fragment taken from the song ' Fade to Black' by American metal band Metallica:

*Things not what they used to be Missing one inside of me  
Deadly loss this can' t be real  
Cannot stand this hell I feel  
Emptiness is filling me To the point of agony  
Growing darkness taking dawn  
I was me but now, he' s gone  
No one but me can save myself, but it' s too late  
Now I can' t think, think why I should even try*

To the tribes, music can function in different ways. The heavies, not like the skaters, use their music as a way to cope with their personal problems: they find a sanctuary in their music as it describes their anger and pain. This does certainly not mean that music is less important to them. Juan Cruz said: "When I am angry, I have to listen to the hardest and loudest metal that ever existed, otherwise I feel like I could kill someone. It helps me blow off steam." It is becoming apparent that music has become an important element in the heavies creation of a private, self-domain within the household apart from the normal oversight of parents.

Listening to music is a major pass-time when they are alone and is tend to be chosen when they are lonely or sad. As Juan Cruz made clear in his quote , listening to metal may fulfill an important "mood control" function for the teens (Roe, 1999).

While hanging, the heavies listen to music and discuss it. In the group, though, they talk about superficialities like how loud the song is or how great the guitar- riffs of a certain song are. While having one- on-one informal conversations they do talk about how a song makes them feel and how the lyrics of a song speak to them. It seems like they want to look tough in front of their group while they show their feelings one on one. It is so that within the heavies the group identity is being constructed as being tough. They profile themselves as hard-working, no-nonsense, independent people who will not take anything from anyone. Showing feelings other than anger or happiness is seen as being weak, and you should keep those emotions to yourself. So boundaries are being made, grounded on acting tough. The heavies cannot deny that they are human beings, so they do show feelings when they are not hanging with the group.

#### **4.3: The music experience: how music helps building a group -identity**

*It is three P.M. in the afternoon of a hot Sunday in Tres Arroyos and Pablo, Agustin, Sabastian, Estefania and myself are sitting around in Pablo's tattoo- room. Somewhere in the distance pavers are drilling the streets to improve the infrastructure. The tattoo- room itself is filled with sounds of the song 'Gil Trabajador'<sup>34</sup> by metal group Hermetica. Nobody is saying anything, it seems like the heat has taken their tongues. All of a sudden Agustin shouts: "Yes! Workers are actually so dumb!" "And why is that?", answers Estefania kind of astonished, because Agustin's cry came out of nowhere. "Just because they work. They bust their behinds working in the burning sun, for practically no money at all. I mean, look at those pavers, it is Sunday afternoon, it is 37 degrees and they are working for nothing. They should be sleeping siesta!" "Yes, but be glad they still have a job, you know how high the unemployment rate is nowadays, they could also be stealing somewhere or killing people. At least they have some dignity", said Pablo. " Well, but stealing is way more easy than working in this country. You get a lot of money, you do not do anything all day, and if you get caught, you serve two weeks in prison and you are let go, thanks to Cristina (Kirchner- JK). Or better: let your kids do the stealing for you, they do not get punished at all.", answered Agustin. "Yes that is true", said Estefania, "Thieves should be punished more severe, and their kids should go to school. But today's government does not want that, they want to keep the people dumb. They want the poor to stay poor, just so they can have more votes." "Yes, it is called corruption and our country is known for that", added Sebastian laughing.*

The above elaborated situation is a good example of how the lyrics of music are put to practice in several ways. One of them is discussion, as is the case above. Discussions like these are useful for the tribes to bond with each other and to create a group identity. According to Stokes (1994), discussing music is part of the so-called musical experience. Other parts of the music experience are making music, listening to the music's message and going to concerts. This musical experience is necessary for members of the urban tribes to locate themselves in the group and as part of the group. I will elaborate these elements one by one, starting with the music's message and discussions, followed by making music and going to concerts.

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<sup>34</sup> **Translation:** foolish working man

As stated before, the urban tribes take the lyrics of their favorite bands very seriously and they try to follow the message that is given through the lyrics. Argentine metal bands like Almafuerite are very critical about the national politics. Singer Ricardo Iorio of Almafuerite is a very well known Peronista political activist who criticizes the Argentine government every time he gets the chance to. The heavies I researched are very big fans of Iorio and every time Almafuerite or Hermetica, Iorio's ex-band, were being heard, the political discussions became reality. Music becomes an inspiration to them to think about the situation the country is in. With their music and the discussions about it, they create an anti-establishment identity as well as a working-class group identity (Roe, 1999; Caffarelli, 2008) Many Argentinean metal bands are Peronistas and they sing about working-class troubles, the heavies can relate to. An example of this is, the above mentioned 'Gil Trabajador' by Hermetica:

*Masticando esta siniestra heredad,  
prisionero estoy en mi ciudad natal  
donando sangre al antojo de un patrón  
por un mísero sueldo*

*Con el cual no logro esquivar  
el trago amargo de este mal momento.  
Mientras el mundo, policía y ladrón,  
me bautizan sonriendo, gil trabajador<sup>35</sup>.*

Lyrics like this are appealing to the heavies as they seem to want to change society. The heavies have very strong opinions about it. But unlike the skaters, they have a grounded reason for that, since they are lower and working-class people. The heavies want to move away from the working class by working towards a better place in society, away from their parents place in society. Mariano<sup>36</sup>, said to me: "My parents have raised me well, but we had very little while growing up. I want more than that: I want society to change to give my kid a better future. And I am the one that can make that difference through working my way up." The heavies want to move away from being poor like their parents, even though the relationship with their parents is usually good.

The skaters try to create more of a rebel-identity through their music. This shows when they have conversations about their music. These conversations, like is the case with the heavies,

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<sup>35</sup> **Translation:** *Chewing on this sinister domain/I am a prisoner in my native city/donating blood to the whim of a boss/for a miserable salary/ With which I do not succeed to dodge/ the bitter gulp of this bad moment/ While the world, the police and thieves/ smilingly baptize me the foolish working man*

<sup>36</sup> Mariano Di Croce (19) is a heavy who has a one-year-old son, with his girlfriend Melanie (17), who is also a heavy.

usually start because of something that is said in a song and then turn into a society- related discussion in which everybody is really against the contemporary society and none of them will ever conform to it. With their choice in music they want to create an 'own' personality or identity with the urban tribe as base and away from their parents. A move away from the parents towards an orientation to peers like the urban tribes is associated with interest in music and music preferences, as well as identification with the music of their urban tribe. (Roe, 1999) states that parent oriented adolescents are less interested in music and listen less frequently to it, while peer oriented adolescents show greater interest in music and listen to it to a greater extent. The peer oriented teens tend to prefer "harder", more socially disvalued forms of rock or punk. Roe's research suggests that problems in the family may provoke adolescents into making a greater investment in the peer group (and the support it provides). In some cases this leads to involvement in music based youth subcultures which are openly anti-adult (Roe, 1999: 4-5). In this case, the subculture and its chosen music provide an alternative source of identity to that provided by the home context. In the case of the skaters they are in an age that they want to rebel to their parents and they do that on behalf of their choice in music and rebellious attitude towards the 'adult world', confirming Roe's theory. Another part of the music experience, making music, is also important for both urban tribes. They also play in bands themselves. When a member of the tribe plays in a band, it gives him a certain status. Other members of the tribe look up to the people in bands and like to hang out with the band as much as possible. Ricardo, for example plays in a skate- punk band called 'Lou Bizarro', with three other skaters. They write their own songs about society, how life is unfair and other meaningful topics.

When asked why he started his band, Ricardo told me: "I wanted to make something out of nothing. It's obvious none of us are genius musicians, none of us are prodigies, none of us are incredibly talented, but we are having fun and are changing stuff, that is what it's all about. One of the reasons I wanted to join the band, was just that part of leaving behind human history. I think it is so cool to leave behind a record after I die, it's like a book for a writer. It's this living testament: "Hey, I was here, this is what I did.""

Going to concerts and making music together can be seen as a group- bonding experience. Stokes, (1994: 91) stated that by experiencing music we become a part of something larger than ourselves. This something has traditionally been "subculture.", this means that music eventually makes the subculture by elevating it from being just a group of friends to a larger phenomenon. I can confirm this theory through what I experienced by seeing a metal band with the heavy group. When we went to the concert, it looked like the group became closer:

they acted differently towards each other and were just having fun, also the people that are no best friends within the group. The heavies oftentimes see their own group as the only group that is 'real'. The rest of the groups are called poseurs that do not know a lot about music. When the heavies are at shows, nothing of this seems to be true, because they treat every other group of heavies as if they are their friends. Sebastian said to me during a concert: "When I am at concerts, I love my urban tribe. I love the heavies, even the ones I usually hate." Nevertheless, at the concerts it was visible that it was something that bonded the group. It was like seeing the heavies in their natural habitat: the concert was their place. After the show, the atmosphere within the group was actually better for a while. The heavies seem to go to every metal-related show there is. The way they talk about going to show is very excited. They really love doing it. Their music is an escape from reality for them. Rock music, as said, has been found to be particularly important for those adolescents who in some way reject the culture of their class background, providing them with a marker of social distance from the parent culture and its expectations. In this way they form their own personal identity. This is, as Roe (1999: 7) says, because inter-generational status mobility, occurring within a larger context of status inequality, is generally accompanied by distinctive shifts in the self-esteem, identity, and lifestyle of individuals and groups that, in turn, lead to distinctive cultural taste and media use patterns (Roe, 1999:7).

#### **4.4: Subconclusion**

This chapter has shown in what way music plays a role in the lives of the urban tribes and how it helps constructing and maintaining a group identity. Music gives the teens a voice with which they can speak out against the mainstream of society, it thus can be seen as a means of resistance and the base of the skaters and heavies. Music is more than that, though, it helps the tribes form a personal as well as a group identity. A personal identity can be constructed by the fact that music seems to help them when they have problems. The teens also identify with the lyrics about, for example, being from the working class. This helps the teens not to forget their roots. A group identity can be constructed and maintained by the music experience. Listening to music, discussing it, and going to concerts helps the group bond, fortifying the group identity. Also boundaries are made with music, as not every type of music is accepted within the group: you have to fit the music-profile to be a part of the tribe. In the next chapter I will talk about the internet and how it is slowly replacing music as the main common denominator for the urban tribes. Hereby I will raise questions about authenticity and the lifespan of internet-based urban tribes

## **5: Internet and Authenticity**

*It was a Tuesday night halfway through my research period and I was feeling disappointed with the outcomes on the internet-part of my research thus far. The skaters were not giving much attention to the tribe in internet-form, and the heavies were not using the internet forums as much as I thought they would. So on that Tuesday night I decided to go on the internet forums by myself. I chose [www.forosmetaleros.com.ar](http://www.forosmetaleros.com.ar), because the heavies used that forum too, and I had joined them a couple of times. I decided to log on and, posing as 'Jacky', I entered a discussion in the thread 'Who is the best guitarist?'. My arguments about Jimi Hendrix' natural talents were well accepted and, to make a long story short, a whole new virtual urban tribe world opened up for me. I was accepted within this tribe, while the people in it did not even know me and did not ask any questions about me or my personality, I was just 'Jacky' to them. All I had to do was to log on as often as possible, sit down, relax, and discuss the 'heavy metal culture'.*

With the coming of internet, urban tribes are more approachable for other people than before, because of the information available and the different forums on which people from different tribes can talk to each other. Before, one had to go out to find the urban tribes on the streets or somewhere else, but nowadays, you can just sit at home and find the urban tribes on your computer. It is easier, because one does not have to do as much as before. The purpose of this chapter is to make clear how in the modern day, the internet is slowly replacing music as the main common denominator and how the urban tribes see this as being non- authentic. The feeling of authenticity is very important to the urban tribes. The urban tribes traditionally measured authenticity by going to concerts as a group, their knowledge of the bands they listen to and go see and their shared opinions about the music (Williams, 2006). With the coming of internet and internet forums, the group becomes less important. This raises questions about whether or not an internet-based urban tribe could exist for longer time, as the priorities do not lie in the maintenance of the group. This is why many heavies see the internet- heavies as non- authentic. I will particularly write about the net- heavies in this section, the internet- version of the heavies as internet is far more important to them than to the skaters.

## **5.1: Importance of internet**

*“Sure the internet is important to us, almost everything we organize goes through the internet, but it is just not what being a skater is about.”*

-Matias

To the skaters and the heavies internet is a big part of their daily life. During my research, I have found that they both use the internet in different ways. I have discovered four different functions of the internet regarding the urban tribes. These functions are using the internet as: a personal area, a public platform, an information devise, or a communication devise. To use the internet as a personal area means to do personal things with it, like making a *facebook*-account, downloading music or buying merchandise. The function of internet as a public platform is to spread your personal opinion on the internet. This can be done by going on forums. Using internet for information, means in my case, looking up information and increasing the knowledge about the urban tribe. For example by doing research on which wheels fit best on your skateboard or looking up concerts for your tribe to go to. Finally, using the internet as a communication devise means talking to your friends and making appointments online. This can be done by e-mail or with for example *MSN Messenger* and other chat- programs. The functions of internet can overlap sometimes, *www.facebook.com*, for example is a personal area, but also a communication devise.

Internet is fairly important for both urban tribes, although for the heavies it is important in a different way than for the skaters. The heavies use the internet more as public platform and as an information devise, while the skaters use it more as a personal area. A reason for this can be that skaters are usually outside skating while they hang with their friends, while heavies prefer to stay inside and are less social than the skaters. As I said before, heavies are far more solitary than the skaters, who are better at making friends on a personal basis and more open as a group, this also has to do with their attitude towards other people. The skaters do not need the internet to make friends. The internet is used especially to make connections with other members of the tribes throughout the country or the world. Skaters also plan skate-events through the internet. But furthermore, as Matias made clear, it is not what is the most important for the skaters, because that is, of course, skating and also music. The skaters use the internet more for their own personal pleasure. The internet to them thus functions as a personal area more than a public platform. The skaters like to go on *facebook*, to post video's of themselves skating on *www.youtube.com* and to look up information about skating and other things. The things the skaters do on the internet have a lot to do with the urban tribe, but it is also more to expand their own knowledge about the sport than to form a special urban

tribe on the internet through forums, they use it as an information device too. Even though there are internet- forums about skating and for the skaters I hung out with, it was like a tradition to go on the forum after they practiced with their band and leave some comments. I do not know if this is also the case with other skaters. Internet does play a big role in the life of the skaters, though. Most of the skaters from my urban tribe said that they go on the internet every day, for at least two or three hours. They do this mostly during the evening and nighttime when it is too dark for them to skate.

The heavies, other than the skaters do go on the internet a lot more and when they do, they go on forums more often. To them, the internet is more of a public platform. What is very noticeable, though, is that there is a big difference between the heavy group that is together because of the music and the heavies that are together online. When I hung out with the heavies we did not go on the forums as often as I had hoped to. We went on forums while hanging sometimes, but when I asked the heavies how often they went on the internet, they said once every two days or so. When I went on the forums by myself, posing as a heavy on the forums, I found a whole new world of heavies, who seemed to have formed a new sort of urban tribe of internet- heavies on the internet-forums, especially on the forum *www.forosmetaleros.com.ar*. There were also some people from Tres Arroyos on the forums, most of them I did not even meet in real life. These people seemed to be online all day, every day. Every time I went on the forums, they were connected. So to them, the internet plays a much bigger role than for the music- based heavies; you can say it rules their lives. That is why the division can be made between the music- based heavies and the internet-heavies. These are two different groups within this thesis.

## **5.2: Identity and authenticity**

*“ Come on, you really think Dimeback Darrel is a better guitarist than Kirk Hammett?  
Please, don't let me think you are a poseur!”*

- Ezequiel in a discussion about guitarists

As said before, heavies like to discuss and show off their knowledge of music, it is part of the ‘music experience’ Stokes (1994) explained. People who know very little about this subject are frowned upon and are sometimes seen as ‘poseurs’. A poseur is someone who acts like he belongs to the urban tribe, but is actually faking it. They are teens who know heavy metal music only via peer-to-peer networks, and they have started interactive forums that thousands of people have joined. As a result of this subcultural diffusion these people have discovered heavy metal in a more distorted form, fractured from its musical roots (Williams, 2006: 176).

Some music-based heavies even say it is a less authentic part of heavy metal culture. Many of these people learn about the heavies online and decide to claim a personal heavy identity, while they actually do not even know how the 'real' heavies are. The real heavies in this case are the ones that became a heavy by listening to heavy metal and were inspired by the looks and attitude of heavy metal bands. Here, being a heavy, becomes more of a personal identity, rather than a group identity, as is the case with the music-based heavies. Some of the internet-heavies later join face-to-face heavy-scenes and develop a social heavy identity, eventually becoming a somewhat 'real' heavy, but many others do not. For real heavies you have to become a heavy, because you identify with heavy metal music and its ideologies, not because you accidentally picked something up on the internet. Sebastian told me: "The heavies on the internet are not real, you do not know them, they could be dirty old men trying to get girls. A heavy is real when he has listened to metal all his life and understands what it is all about." A similar thing was said by Ezequiel: "When you like to join our tribe, you have to be real. You have to like heavy metal music and let the music speak for you. On the internet there are forums on which they just talk about it, without it having any function for the group, this is not being real. The people on the internet are just not real."

The few existing theories on internet within youth cultures are not always sufficient, because they do not mention that for people who do not participate in face-to-face scenes, the internet is more than a medium; it is more of a social space through which personal and social identities can be constructed, given meaning, and shared through the ritual of going on internet forums and chatting to each other. Here they are somewhat missing out on the other elements face-to-face urban tribe do have. Contacts are made more easily and urban tribes do not need to have a 'real' place to meet anymore: they meet on the internet. But still these people are considered fake and poseurs. Juan Cruz once said: 'You cannot become heavy, it is something you are or are not'. Most of the heavies seem to think that being heavy is somewhat of a born identity. Their view on identity could even be called essentialist, because they see it as a 'thing' that somebody has or has not (Ghorashi, 2003). Identity is mostly seen as an aspect that can be chosen in certain situations. The choices someone makes, have influence on his or her identity. But there are parts that cannot be changed, like your age or sex. The heavies seem to think this is also the case with being a heavy. The only thing is that this cannot be true, since every heavy eventually has become a heavy in some stadium of his or her life. It is also that every group thinks that the only group of heavies that is truly real is their own group. Other groups of heavies are slightly less 'real' than their own group, because they may listen to other bands or ride other motorcycles. The fact that heavies see only their

own group as real, could be caused by the in-betweenness of the teens, as Alan France and Sandu (2007) explain it. Their group is where they can feel as a whole person and therefore it is their safe haven. In their minds, other groups can never fulfill that function, and therefore they are not 'real' to the heavies. They do not belong to that group, you got to have certain characteristics to belong to the urban tribes. As stated in chapter 3, boundaries are being made by the way one looks, which music he likes and from which class he is. On these and other characteristics the tribe decides whether someone is real or not. It can be said that being 'real' is very important for the heavies, because the worst thing you can accuse a heavy of is being fake or a poseur. Heavies have a deep hate for poseurs. Agustin said to me: "People who pose are the saddest people. They cannot think for themselves and have no opinion of their own whatsoever." One threat on *forosmetaleros* was actually: 'Poseurs must die'. The concept 'poseur' is actually more complicated than it sounds. It is not only somebody who is faking it on the internet, but it can also be a 'true' member of an urban tribe that all of a sudden begins to hang out with other people who do not belong to the tribe or who stops listening to heavy metal. Here it comes to the surface that being a poseur has also a lot to do with betraying the urban tribe. One has a certain loyalty to the tribe that has to do with the codes formed in it and when someone breaks those codes he can be seen as a poseur. What happens here again is again the definition between 'us' and 'them', an *ingroup* and *outgroup*, in which members of the *ingroup* (the 'real' heavies) distance themselves from membership of the *outgroup* (the internet- heavies) which does not share the same beliefs and ideas of their group and take more account of the beliefs and ideas of their social group (Chryssochoou, 2004: 53). This means that there are other boundaries being made.

The use of the internet can make an urban tribe more solid, by connecting the whole country. But authenticity is still very important as comes to the surface with the hate against the poseurs.

What I have found while going on forums by myself and with other people (skaters or heavies) is that people on the forums and on other urban-tribes related sites seek a type of approval from other people or urban tribes they want to belong to. They know the urban tribes create certain boundaries and that not everyone can become a member, thus they try to impress them so they can be part of that group. They want to create a personal online identity that fits well within the group identity. What happens here is the shifting of identities Ghorashi (2003) talks about. One can create his own identity by overcompensating or under compensating aspects of their actual identity. For the online heavies this is not very hard to do, since nobody on the forum knows who they actually are, so they change their identities to

seek approval for the group. The internet is a social space where people can try out different roles, identities, and ways of acting. Most people are very concerned with how others perceive them and try to act in a way that others may think of as ‘tough’, just to draw the attention of the urban tribe they want to belong to. They put ‘shocking’ threads on forums or use strong language just to belong. Of course, people are not necessarily concerned with what everybody thinks about them, but rather with the approval of significant others, like friends or their tribe. This concern exists in both face-to-face situations and computer-related situations. The main thing about the internet forums is that they are most of the times anonymous. These anonymous qualities of the internet may empower many people to play with how they present themselves online. With this, they also create boundaries, but in a whole different way than the music-based tribes. From interviews and scientific articles (e.g. Williams, 2006: 178), I have noticed, though, that most of the people that go on forums are interested in building and expressing friendship grounded in meaningful interaction with others from their urban tribe. The strong language and shocking threads I have talked about before serve to the internet-members here to draw attention and to profile themselves in a certain way. As becomes clear in the theoretic framework (e.g. Benson, 2003; Ter Bogt, 2000; Moore, 2007), the heavies want to rebel against the mainstream. On the internet this is done by profiling themselves as being as ‘anti- mainstream’ as possible, using coarse language about it. Because the internet-members do not have looks to show how anti-mainstream they are, they use words. This is something the theories researched by me do not talk about, it could be because of the lack of research there has been done about internet based urban tribes. Still using words by lack of looks and behavior is most certainly a way to rebel against the mainstream. The internet-members want to be recognized at first. But once you talk to them more often on the forums, they show more of their true self. Or what they want you to believe it is their true self, because on the internet you practically do not know who is real and who is not. The internet-heavies are in this way similar to the music- heavies: anti-social when you first meet them, but social once you get to know them. The usefulness of the internet in facilitating the diffusion of the heavy subculture is clear in the comments made in the forums, just as it is clear in the discussions about authenticity (Williams, 2006: 176). As one participant wrote on *forosmetaleros*., a forum is “just about creating a space in which we can talk about metal. That’s all, I guess it’s about making a difference. Small as it may be, it is something, you know?”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Quote taken from: [www.forosmetaleros.com.ar](http://www.forosmetaleros.com.ar)

### **5.3: Net versus scene**

Added to the growing awareness of the power of the internet, there were many internet heavies who openly questioned the relative roles of music and the internet in spreading heavy culture. This is according to the function of using internet as a public platform. On a post on *forosmetaleros*, a person who calls himself 'Ramon' on the forum made clear what Williams (2006) also explains. That all subcultures change as people come to attach new sets of meaning to their own practices and to the social objects involved in those practices (Williams, 2006: 194).

“Ramon: Music is transient. Heavy metal will eventually warp into other forms of music and fade from existence, whether you like to believe it or not. Once the music is gone, does that mean you metal scenesters want metal and all of its Ideals gone with it? Metal can influence SO many people for the better. It has helped so many people change their lives for the better. That, to me, is a LOT more important than your stupid scene. Maybe you think “that’s great” but you still don’t think they should call themselves heavy. Well I say who gives a damn? Obviously the heavy label helped them out, so for fuck’s sake . . . let them have it! If the internet can provide that, then I think that’s great. I know I found out about heavy metal one way and someone else found out about it another way, etc. and this is just yet another way of doing it. It opens up the barrier a little bit. If you don’t like how it does that, then I don’t know why you would sign up here and support its occurrence.”<sup>38</sup>

Still, people who only use the internet as a source of communication and to find friends are not really accepted as ‘real’ members of the tribes. They form somewhat of an own urban tribe on the internet, because outside the internet they are not accepted as a member. It could even be said that they form their tribe on the internet as a way to resist to the music-based scene who will not accept them. In this way they create boundaries against the outside world and the music-based heavies, so they could form their own front against the world on the forums. In either way, internet-created tribes continue to build what they perceive as authentic online as internet sites emerge as new subcultural scenes (Williams, 2006: 179). To internet-created tribes, music is not the main bonding-aspect. It is the internet-communication that matters and the new friends they meet online. Some of them say that they do not even want to belong to a real life heavy metal scene. On one forum about rock- music, I found this comment to a threat named ‘*The scene: friend or faux*’:

“Lorddoom54: I hate scenes . . . I hate scene drama. I hate that there is a hierarchy within the scene, almost like a caste system. I hate everything having to do with them. Metalheads are so wrapped up in the scene that they forget important things.

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<sup>38</sup> Quote taken from: [www.forosmetaleros.com.ar](http://www.forosmetaleros.com.ar)

The world is falling apart and somewhere there is a kid worried because the scene looks bad.”<sup>39</sup>

Rather than claim a social identity based on peers' expectations, net urban tribers emphasized personal identities grounded in a commitment to the heavy lifestyle. Lifestyle “attributes the reflexivity which informs individual creativity to a desire on the part of individuals to take an active part in the making and remaking of their image and identity” (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004, 13). In other words, net-urban tribers believe that their personal actions, rather than their membership in a category, constituted their authenticity. This criticism functioned to disrupt subcultural boundaries, opening them up for reevaluation (Williams. 2006: 190-191). In addition to direct criticism of the scene, net-heavies emphasized their belief that heavy metal was changing and that this change was necessary for the subculture's survival. Music to them is a less important factor to build up the tribe. Some heavies even had the idea that the urban tribe was limited by its association with the fact that every heavy needs to have his roots in heavy metal music.

In one interview I had with Martin, this also comes to the surface:

Martin: I think it would be a great thing if the heavy metal movement could cut loose from the music thing and become more inclusive to people that do not put music first.

Me: Do you think people in the forums would want that to happen?

Martin: Some people would love it. It's an open-minded thing. I do not think that being a heavy is only listening to heavy metal, it is a lifestyle more than a music thing. People should follow the ideologies more than the music. But that is just my opinion.

Martin Herrera was a forum participant for only a couple of months. During that time he became very aware of the divisions that existed among forum participants. He quickly became disillusioned by the forum, because of this. Martin believed that the heavy urban tribe would remain limited and ineffective if it remained tied to the heavy metal music scene. More broadly, a lot of participants in the forums were concerned with the idea that the urban tribe was being reduced to “just a bunch of people arguing over what it is.” Arguments about what the scene was, as well as the authenticity or inauthenticity of various forum participants was, in his mind, destroying the urban tribe.

When looking at it from another way, it could be said that the talks about authenticity versus inauthenticity and net versus scene were actually destroying the internet urban tribes. Now,

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<sup>39</sup> Quote taken from: [www.forosmetaleros.com.ar](http://www.forosmetaleros.com.ar)

after 5 years of existence, and one month after my research, the forum does not exist anymore. According to Martin *www.forosmetaleros.com.ar* had too little participants to continue existing. The dream the members had to change the heavy- scene into a more internet-orientated scene has ceased to succeed, because of a lack of popularity. This says something about urban tribes that are based on personal identities rather than a group identity. The internet-heavies lacked the solidarity that the music-based heavies have. They do not have any rituals, codes or other bonding experiences that face-to-face tribes have, they only have the forum that holds them together, nothing else. The boundaries and codes that are created by urban tribes to create a group identity are very much needed to keep the urban tribe alive, otherwise it just falls apart as did the tribe of the internet- heavies. It could be said that the heavies are too music- orientated to let that part of the tribe go and change it to internet-forums. And it was just this that the music-based heavies were holding up against the net-heavies: without music coming first, the tribe is inauthentic. The net-heavies have to find another way, or another forum to keep the tribe alive. Otherwise they have to give up on their internet-dream and let the heavies remain to be all about the music.

#### **5.4: Subconclusion**

In this chapter I have talked about internet-bases urban tribes. Internet-based tribes are a fairly modern phenomenon that is still not very much accepted among the music-based tribes who find them inauthentic. Authenticity by them is measured by going to concerts and experiencing music, and not by talking about it on the internet. Net-tribers do think they are authentic and even think that the role of music should be diminished, in order to let the tribe survive. It is also so that within net-tribes the focus lies in the construction of a personal identity instead of a solid group identity. This is because of the anonymity of the tribes. Without a firm group identity and rituals to fortify this, a net tribe could never last long. The discussion can be raised about whether or not these urban tribes will have a future and if the internet will continue to play a big role in the formation of urban tribes

## Conclusion

In this thesis I have focused on the identity construction of two urban tribes: the skaters and the heavies. I have approached these tribes on two main subjects: their connection with music and with the internet. In my research the construction of a group identity through to these two subjects was of great importance as within youth culture music as well as the internet are used to create an *other*. The *other* in this case are people who do not belong in the tribe and never will. Music and the internet are also to reassure the *self* of the group, forming a front against the *other* and the mainstream (Ghorashi, 2003). It is therefore that the main question in this research was: *'How do the urban tribes in Tres Arroyos construct their identity through music and the internet?'*

I approached identity in a constructivist manner, meaning that identity is constructed, negotiable and situational (Ghorashi, 2003). Urban tribes are approached as a subculture of Argentinean youth.

My analysis started on the concept of urban tribes, what are they and how do they profile themselves? Urban tribes are groups of people who share common interests in urban areas. They are most of the times formed by teenagers in their mid-teen years. They feel like they do not belong anywhere in society: they are too young for most things, but on the other hand, too old for many other things. They are in an in-between stage of life and feel like they do not have a purpose. This in-betweenness takes a very important part in the forming of an urban tribe, as the tribe makes them feel like they belong somewhere and this makes them feel like a whole person again (Alan France and Sandu, 2007). The process of othering and the creation of boundaries is essential to form and maintain an urban tribe- identity. There are some rules and codes that are unwritten, but still are taken seriously. People have to look a certain way, wear the 'right' type of clothes, like the 'right' kind of music, or have the 'right' kind of interest. What is 'right' differs per tribe, but if you do not have the 'right' kind of qualities, you cannot become a full member of an urban tribe. For the urban tribes, the most obvious way to create boundaries is by their looks. To belong to an urban tribe, you have to look a certain way, otherwise you will not be seen as real. The looks have a lot to do with rebelling against the mainstream, it is a statement of anti-establishment. The urban tribes create with their looks a boundary against society, showing that they are not a part of the mainstream (Moore, 2007; Ter Bogt, 2000). In Tres Arroyos the urban tribes are very recognizable, especially because they tend to dress the same per tribe. The skaters wear certain brands

clothes and baseballcaps on the sides of their head. The skaters wear their leather, bandshirts and huge motorcycles. They do this so that people notice them and think that they are not a part of the society the adults create.

This resistance is in fact the most important factor for the urban tribes. The mainstream is to the urban tribes the above mentioned *other* in the process of othering. The mainstream is the adult world, the parents, teachers, the government, sometimes even society in its whole. But it can also be other urban tribes: the skaters and the heavies see each other as the mainstream too. All in all the mainstream is the *outgroup*, that has been given all negative characteristics by the urban tribes and is seen as something they do not want to belong to (Chrysochoou, 2004). Rebelling to their parents and teachers is used to make a boundary between their tribe and the mainstream, as seen by them. If you conform to the mainstream, you cannot be part of the urban tribe.

Both tribes rebel against the mainstream in many ways, for example, by their looks, their statements, their behavior and their political identity being Peronista.

Resistance is not the only thing that keeps the urban tribes together. As McMillan and Chavis (1986:14) state: a group needs boundaries to decide who is in or out, membership of a group provides emotional safety for its members and a sense of belonging and identification. It requires a personal investment to remain a member and a common symbol system to keep the group together and create a group code. Both the skaters and the heavies have their own codes. They have certain rituals that function as a bonding mechanism. Like the theme song of the heavies. But they also have their own way of speaking and hand signs, this creates a sort of secretive like-knows-like atmosphere that is also a boundary towards the outside world. Other people do not know them, and are excluded from the group, as they have created an *ingroup* and *outgroup*.

The most important common denominator the urban tribes have is their music. Both urban tribes would not be the same, or would maybe not even exist without music. Music, to the urban tribes is not simply a static cultural object which is produced and consumed, but an active code of resistance and a template which is used for the formation of new forms of individual and collective identity (Stokes, 1994: 91). They use the music to rebel against the 'other' that is the mainstream and to form a group identity, using music as a bonding mechanism. According to Stokes (1994), it is the 'music experience' that is especially important. The music experience means discussing music, making music, listening to the music's message and going to concerts. This music experience is necessary for members of

the urban tribes to locate themselves in the group and as part of the group, thereby creating a personal identity within the already existing group identity. Both urban tribes also use the lyrics of metal and punk songs to create a group identity as they describe the statements of the urban tribes. It is a way to say things to, for example, the police or the government, without actually having to speak for themselves. The lyrics function as a voice for the tribes.

Nowadays it is not only music that lays the basis for the urban tribes. The internet is gaining more ground as it becomes an important means for the urban tribes to communicate with each other, to look for information about the tribes, as a personal area and as a public platform (Turkle, 1995). There are even urban tribes that are made through the internet, these are the so-called net-urban tribes, as for example the net- heavies. Net- heavies are the internet – version of the music- based heavies, they meet through internet forums where they talk about metal, music and the urban tribe itself. With the coming of these net- tribes, the discussion about authenticity became more and more important to the heavies. To the net- heavies a personal identity is more important than the group identity. They only know the way a certain person profiles himself, shifting from his actual identity. To the music-heavies this is unheard of, because according to them, being a heavy is a born identity. This raises questions about the building blocks of such identities. It is not surprising that there are many discussions going between the net- heavies and the music- heavies. There were many internet heavies who openly questioned the relative roles of music and the internet in spreading heavy culture. They think that the role of music should be reduced and the role of the internet should be increased to keep heavy culture alive. In contemporary studies about youth culture this is not common, as they often conclude that music is the main building block of a group or group identity (e.g. Moore, 2007; Stokes, 1994; Stahl, 2004). The opinion of the net-heavies does show a lot of similarities with the internet- straightedgers Williams (2006) researched. They also claimed music should be put in the background to keep the straightedge- community alive. Too bad this still is not going on, because music is still the most important factor to the tribes.

This brings us back to the main question: *'How do the urban tribes in Tres Arroyos construct their identity through music and the internet?'.* As becomes clear, the urban tribes in Tres Arroyos create their identity mainly by resisting against the mainstream, they profile themselves in such a way that they seem a group apart from the rest of society. Music is used as a tool to resist to the mainstream as it gives the urban tribes a voice with which they can speak out against it. The fact that not everyone knows the music also gives the tribes a bonding- feeling that helps building a group identity, because it is something special from their group. But music does not only help to build a group identity, it is also of use to build a

personal identity, as especially for the heavies, it can function as a 'mood control device' (Roe, 1999). It can help them with their problems and become part of them.

The internet is a rather new phenomenon that is still not the most important factor for the urban tribes in Tres Arroyos to build their identity, except for the net-tribes. In most youth cultures, music is what brings them together and that helps constructing their identity. The net-tribes use the internet to create a personal identity. With all these personal identities, they try to build a group identity, posting that the music should come after the internet and that they are the actual heavies. But due to the lack of rituals, symbols and other bonding-mechanisms of the internet-tribes, a firm group identity could never exist for a long time. A proof for this could be the disappearance of *www.forosmetaleros.com*. The internet, though, is still a new thing within urban tribes, that will not cease to exist entirely, due to the growing importance of it within society. The fact that members can play with identity and choose who they want to be, makes the internet an ideal place to start a new subculture, shifting away from the common subcultures.

So in conclusion it can be said that music is still the most important factor when it comes to building a group identity, but the internet is gaining importance as youth culture is changing towards it, using the internet more than ever. When it comes to group identity-building, though, music will remain the most important as it touches the tribes in their hearts and gives them a voice to resist, while the internet is more of an anonymous social space on which mostly personal identities could be made up.

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## Annex 1: list of informants in the urban tribes

### Skaters:

Name	Age	Trivia
Matias Lopez	27	Matias is the owner of Iguanos skate shop and skatepark. He is seen as the main skater of Tres Arroyos since he started everything. Matias is actually part of every skater tribe, since he hangs out with every other tribe in Tres Arroyos.
Ricardo Gastelu	25	Ricardo is the leader of the Iguanos skaters, he is the oldest member of the tribe and has won the most competitions. His wealth is a main factor to his leadership too. Ricardo is also the lead singer of Lou Bizarro.
Ezequiel Giordano	22	Ezequiel is a student of law that lives in La Plata during the week, but still hangs out with the Tresarroyan skaters during the weekend, he is a very good friend of Matias.
Lucas Rodriguez	21	Lucas skates from a very young age and even was national champion at 19.
Facundo Boretti	21	Facundo studies tourism in Tres Arroyos and is Lucas's best friend. He is originally from Buenos Aires and his nickname is therefore 'El Porteño'.
Luis Juarez	17	Luis is the lead guitarist of skate-punk band Lou Bizarro and best friends with Dardo.
Dardo Villanueva	16	Dardo is a very dominant member of the tribe as he is slightly hyperactive and has a big mouth. He is also the drummer of Lou Bizarro.
Daniel Mayer	14	Daniel is the bassist of Lou Bizarro and he is always the one being laughed at within the group. He makes remarks that are seen as dumb, he falls a lot during skating and is not that successful with girls.
Javier Sosa	13	Javier is the youngest member of the skatertribe and feels like he has to proof himself to the group. He practices a lot and sees Matias as an example.
Viviana Larrañaga	18	Lucas' girlfriend
Laura Burelli	16	

		Luis's girlfriend
Sol Del Negro	15	Sol hangs around with the skaters, because she is very much in love with Dardo, who is not giving her the attention she wants
Dayana Galli	16	Dayana is one of the two skatergirls in Tres Arroyos. She is a self-proclaimed feminist who thinks it is unfair that girls are excluded from being a skater
Corina Muros	15	Corina is the other skatergirl, she is very mellow-minded and goes to the same private school the male skaters of her age go to.

### Heavies

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b><u>Trivia</u></b>
Pablo DelValle	25	Pablo is a diehard 'motoquero'. In his daily life he is a beekeeper and a tattoo-artist. Within the group he functions as the psychologist as the members come to him for advice and to talk about their problems.
Estefania Soriano	23	Estefania always says that she is not a heavy, while actually she is the stereotype female heavy. She is also a very fanatical Peronista.
Edi Attema	22	Edi is Estefania's boyfriend and her complete opposite, he is very quiet and does not like to share his opinion within a group. He works at a farm.
Sebastian Martin	21	Sebastian is the laughing stock of the group as he is obsessed with his hair and his looks. In his daily life he works at a grocery store.
Ezequiel Madsen	21	Ezequiel is very politically engaged. He is a member of the Young Peronistas and does a lot of work for them. He also goes to a lot of protests, throughout the country.
Juan Cruz Zubillaga	20	Juan Cruz is the bassist of a metalband called Bastardos, he is Agustin's best friend as they know each other from when they were babies.
Agustin Lozano	20	Agustin is very much obsessed with music, he plays guitar in Bastardos. He particularly is obsessed with the band Almafuerite and Ricardo Iorio is his all-time hero.
Vanessa Delardo	20	Vanessa is accepted within the group, but is always teased about the fact that she is from a rich family, while the rest is not. In discussions she is always overshadowed by the rest because of this.

Daniela Rodriguez	20	Daniela works at a cereal factory and is Vanessa's best friend
Martin Herrera	19	Martin used to be a net-heavy as he was on forosmetaleros for a long time. He is one of the view net- heavies that made it into the music- based heavy scene.
Mariano Di Croce	19	Mariano is the one who always tries to find new, unknown bands for the tribe to like. In his daily life he is a creditcard-salesman.
Melanie Garcia	18	Melanie is Mariano's girlfriend, together they have a 1-year-old son, for whom they both take care.

## Annex 2: Illustrations of important handsymbols of the urban tribes



The 'corona-sign' is very often used by the heavies during concerts, while headbanging or to confirm that something is 'cool'.



The 'todo-lindo' - sign is used by the skaters while skateboarding to show everything is going well.



The 'peace-out' - sign is used by the skaters when they are going away. It is a greeting sign.



This sign is an insult- sign the heavies use. It is only used during fights or arguments.



The 'te- quiero' - sign is used by the heavies to show their love for a certain person, band or situation.



The 'perfecto' -sign is used sarcastically by the the skaters when, for example someone falls off his skateboard or fails at a stunt.

## **Annex 3: Full lyrics of important**

### **La Renga- El Rebelde:**

Soy el que nunca aprendió  
desde que nació

cómo debe vivir el humano  
llegué tarde, el sistema ya estaba enchufado  
así funcionando.

Siempre que haya reunión  
será mi opinión  
la que en familia desate algún bardo  
no puedo acotar, está siempre mal  
la vida que amo.

Caminito al costado del mundo  
por ahí he de andar  
buscándome un rumbo  
ser socio de esta sociedad me puede matar.

Y me gusta el rock, el maldito rock

siempre me lleva el diablo, no tengo religión  
quizá éste no era mi lugar  
pero tuve que nacer igual.

No me convence ningún tipo de política  
ni el demócrata, ni el fascista  
porque me tocó ser así  
ni siquiera anarquista.

Yo veo todo al revés, no veo como usted  
yo no veo justicia, sólo miseria y hambre  
o será que soy yo que llevo la contra  
como estandarte.

Perdonenme pero soy así soy, yo no sé por qué  
se que hay otros también  
es que alguien debía de serlo, que prefiera la  
rebelión  
a vivir padeciendo

### **Los Violadores- Represion**

Hermosa tierra de amor y paz  
Hermosa gente cordialidad  
Fútbol, asado y vino  
son los gustos del pueblo argentino.

Censura vieja y obsoleta  
en films, en revistas y en historietas.  
Fiestas conchetas y aburridas  
en donde está la diversión perdida.

## **songs for the urban tribes**

Represión a la vuelta de tu casa  
Represión en el quiosco de la esquina  
Represión en la panadería  
Represión 24 horas al día.

Semanas largas sacrificadas  
Trabajo duro, muy poca paga  
Desocupados, no pasa nada  
en dónde está la igualdad total?

Represión que te aniquila  
Represión que no se olvida  
Represión en nuestras vidas  
Represión...

Yo no quiero represión  
Detestamos a la represión  
Nos burlamos de la represión  
Nos cagamos en la represión  
Represión...

### **2 Minutos- Gatillo Facil**

Un gatillo fácil siempre se puede encontrar  
en una esquina, en cualquier lugar.  
Por eso acordate cuando vas a salir,  
que en está selva no se puede dormir.

Una bala se escapó, la tiro ese señor  
que estaba justo ahí disfrazado de azul

Gatillo Facil hay hay hay, Gatillo facil  
Gatillo Facil hay hay hay, Gatillo facil

Un gatillo fácil siempre se puede encontrar  
en una esquina, en cualquier lugar.  
Por eso acordate cuando vas a salir,  
que en está selva no se puede dormir.

Gatillo Facil hay hay hay, Gatillo facil  
Gatillo Facil hay hay hay, Gatillo facil

### **Sumo- La rubia tarada**

Caras conchetas, miradas berretas  
y hombres encajados en Fiorucci.  
Oigo "dame" y "quiero" y "no te metas"  
"Te gustó el nuevo Bertolucci?".

La rubia tarada, bronceada, aburrída,  
me dice "Por qué te pelaste?"  
Y yo "Por el asco que dá tu sociedad.  
Por el pelo de hoy ¿cuánto gastaste?"

Un pseudo punkito, con el acento finito  
quiere hacerse el chico malo.  
Tuerce la boca, se arregla el pelito,  
se toma un trago y vuelve a Belgrano

Basta! Me voy, rumbo a la puerta  
y después al boliche a la esquina  
a tomar una ginebra con gente despierta.

Esta si que es Argentina!

### **Metallica- Fade to Black**

Life it seems will fade away  
Drifting further every day  
Getting lost within myself  
Nothing matters, no one else

I have lost the will to live  
Simply nothing more to give  
There is nothing more for me  
Need the end to set me free

Things not what they used to be  
Missing one inside of me  
Deathly lost, this can't be real  
Cannot stand this hell I feel

Emptiness is filling me  
To the point of agony  
Growing darkness taking dawn  
I was me but now he's gone

No one but me can save myself  
But it's too late  
Now I can't think  
Think why I should even try

Yesterday seems as though  
It never existed  
Death greets me warm  
Now I will just say goodbye

### **Hermetica- Gil Trabajador**

El tormento del vino artificial  
y su atmósfera parrillera  
anestesian la conciencia común,  
que transcurre su infancia  
en la tierra estomacal

Masticando esta siniestra heredad,  
prisionero estoy en mi ciudad natal  
donando sangre al antojo de un patrón  
por un mísero sueldo

Con el cual no logro esquivar  
el trago amargo de este mal momento  
Mientras el mundo, policía y ladrón,  
me bautizan sonriendo, gil trabajador

Bestia humana que duermes aún  
de la cuna al ataúd,  
extraviada del rumbo a seguir  
por ignorar que no existe el fin  
del que escapar

De Pacheco a la Paternal,  
de Dock Sud a 3 de Febrero,  
mil amigos con el corazón  
esperan esta canción

Para atravesar  
el trago amargo de este mal momento  
Mientras el mundo, policía y ladrón,  
me bautizan sonriendo, gil trabajador

Gil, gil trabajador

## **Annex 4: Summary of the thesis in Spanish (Resumen en Español)**

### **Tribus Urbanas: Construcción de identidad en culturas juveniles Argentinas**

Esta tesis explora una cuestión que viene concitando especialmente la atención de la opinión pública en los últimos tiempos: el fenómeno de las tribus urbanas. Esta clase de manifestaciones juveniles se expande a pasos grandes en las ciudades de muchos países de América Latina. Se trata de grupos que se reúnen en torno de una visión del mundo, de una cierta ideología, de una estética (peinado, maquillaje o modo de vestir) y del gusto por determinado género musical. Toman distancia de la sociedad, del mundo adulto, y constituyen espacios de encuentro y de contención. En los cuales comparten intereses e inquietudes y se brindan protección unos a otros (Caffarelli, 2008:10).

Desde los históricos *hippies* y *rockeros* hasta los actuales *heavies* y *skaters* una vasta cantidad de agrupados se ha conformado, reivindicando un postulado que, más allá de las diferentes expresiones que adquiere, tiene igual connotación: la de manifestar la insatisfacción que les genera a los jóvenes el modo en que el mundo se presenta ante ellos (Caffarelli, 2008:10).

En esta tesis me ocupare de la descripción de las tribus urbanas y la interpretación de sus ideas, pensamientos y comportamientos. Las tribus urbanas a quienes me dedico son los *skaters* y los *heavies* en Tres Arroyos, provincia de Buenos Aires, Argentina. Esta tesis se dirige especialmente a la relación que tienen las tribus con la música y el internet. Es por esto que la pregunta central es:

*‘Como construyen su identidad las tribus urbanas en Tres Arroyos a través la música y el internet?’*

Para los *heavies* y los *skaters* la música el factor más importante para formar su tribu. La música es la voz de la tribu, un instrumento para protestar contra la sociedad, pero también es usada como un modo de unión. Las tribus, por ejemplo, van a conciertos para reafirmar las amistades, además de escuchar y tocar música juntos.

La música siempre fue muy importante para la formación y mantenimiento de las tribus urbanas, pero las tribus contemporáneas cada vez más se relacionan con el internet. Actualmente hay tribus urbanas que son formadas por el internet, la tribu más famosa siendo la de los *floggers*. Pero también hay una desviación de los *heavies* que se manifiesta por el internet: los *net-heavies* quienes forman una tribu urbana separada de los *heavies* ‘musicales’. El internet es un modo ideal para dar opiniones sobre el gobierno o la sociedad por la anonimidad total que tiene. Las

net- tribus por esto se manifiestan de la misma manera que las ‘tribus comunes’: protestando y rebelando y excluyendo el mundo adulto.

La tribu urbana funciona así como un ámbito que congrega, que produce el encuentro con los ‘mejantes’ (los que son ‘como nosotros’) y que aparta a los ‘diferentes’ (los ‘otros’, los que ‘no son como nosotros’). Esta confluencia, la reunión con los pares, ayuda a quienes viven en la sociedad de las masas en donde el encuentro interpersonal parece ser cada vez más difícil, que salgan de su ‘encapsulamiento’, es decir que dejen de refugiarse en sí mismos en su individualidad y se fundan en la experiencia y en la identidad que les brinda el hecho de ser parte de una tribu. En el marco de la tribu, cada integrante compone una imagen y desarrolla actitudes y comportamientos comunes a los del resto del grupo, gracias a los cuales deja de ser tan solo un sujeto anónimo para pasar a ser alguien que pertenece a un colectivo. De este modo, reafirma su identidad, su ‘ser persona’ y su sentido de pertenencia a la agrupación, el cual, además, se refuerza al participar de experiencias conjuntas y rituales, por ejemplo ir a conciertos o tener un propio idioma inventado (Caffarelli, 2008:36).

Cada tribu quiere ser diferente del resto de los grupos y de la sociedad toda, por esto se muestra uniforme: viste del mismo modo, asume conductas y gustos similares y defiende causas de la tribu.

En definitiva podemos afirmar que las tribus urbanas representan un instrumento del que se valen los jóvenes hoy para darle un significado y una cierta intensidad a su experiencia personal; para desarrollar lazos de afecto con otros sujetos; para encontrarse compartir con pares, con otros que sienten como ellos; para elaborar su imagen social, su aspecto, la forma en que se muestran antes de los otros (Caffarelli, 2008:37). Construyendo una identidad en el camino, reuniéndose, escuchando música o chateando por internet.