

# **UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO USFQ**

**Colegio de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades**

## **Redefining Individual and Collective Identities in Argentina: Using Music Censorship as a Tool to Enforce Power on Culture during the Military Dictatorship of 1976**

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**Lorena Elizabeth Rule Coder**

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**Lorena Elizabeth Rule Coder**

Calificación:

Nombre del profesor, Título académico

Tamara Ann Trowsell, P.h.D. en  
Relaciones Internacionales

Firma del profesor

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Firma del estudiante: \_\_\_\_\_

Nombres y apellidos: Lorena Elizabeth Rule Coder

Código: 00105607

Cédula de Identidad: 1712591443

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## **RESUMEN**

En 1976 Argentina enfrentó una dictadura militar caracterizada por tendencias autoritarias que se manifestaron en hechos control y tortura. El impacto que tuvieron estos hechos inhumanos crearon lazos fuertes entre la población que buscaba escapar en lo posible del temor que vivían debido al gran número de desaparecidos y muertos. De forma individual y colectiva las identidades fueron readaptadas debido a distintos actos como la censura de música utilizada como herramienta del gobierno para imponer su poder. Será importante buscar la relación entre identidad, censura de música, poder y movimientos sociales para lograr comprender el impacto que tuvo el la dictadura militar.

Palabras clave: Argentina, dictadura militar, identidad, censura, música, poder y movimientos sociales

## ABSTRACT

The military dictatorship of 1976 in Argentina used authoritarian qualities to portray acts of cruelty and control. The military run government was known worldwide for the large number of disappearances and deaths that impacted the population and created spaces of cultural transformation. Individually and collectively identities faced a certain form of makeover that can be understood through the imposition of music censorship used as a tool by the military dictatorship to enforce power. The further description of this connection will be intertwined in the relationship found between identity, music censorship, power and social movements.

*Key words:* Argentina, military dictatorship, identity, censorship, music, power and social movements

## **TABLA DE CONTENIDO**

Introducción .....	7
Desarrollo de Tema.....	8
Conclusiones.....	29
Bibliografía.....	32

## INTRODUCTION

In December 1983, after the military dictatorial regime was removed from power, Argentina's National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons (CONADEP) started an in depth investigation to solve the cases of 30,000 individuals titled *Nunca Más* (Never Again). This title and the content of the investigation reflected the way in which the dictatorial regime handled punishment if someone disobeyed the change of policies. Acts of murder, rape, torture, extortion, looting and other unpunished crimes took place under the framework of the political and ideological persecution from 1976 to 1983 (CONADEP 1984, 1). Argentina's new democratically elected President Raúl Alfonsín, initiated this government-run project after the trial of the juntas, when the de facto military government was put to question for the disappearance and torture of Argentinians. The numerous captures of individuals both male and female, the disappearance of babies born to imprisoned females, and the penalizing by death of those who worked for the regime and refused to continue with such acts of torture all became the central topics of the trial. The devastated Argentinian population needed answers to this gruesome reality.

This paper will review the process of redefining individual and collective identities in Argentina, after the military coup took place in 1976, when music censorship was one of the many tools this government used to enforce power on culture. The disappearance, or death, of 30,000 individuals during the historical period known as the process of national reorganization was characterized by a brutal military intervention that had never been experienced previously to such extremes in Latin America (Wilson 2008, 51). Additionally, "The Proceso was more than just a repressive regime; it was a systematic and conscious plan to implement terror and to restrict and mold public media utterly, in order to effect a radical transformation of consciousness in the populace" (Wilson 2008, 51). The consciousness Wilson refers to will be interpreted throughout the essay in the transformation of identities.

Argentiniens were forced to redefine their identities given the constant restrictions applied to culture by the military dictatorship.

Through the following sections of the paper we will cover basic concepts, history and the two social contract theories. History allows us to understand the particular aspects of the military dictatorship and the results brought forth when applying the concepts. The connection between identity, censorship, power and social movements is something that must be understood analyzing the appearance or application of these concepts during the dictatorship. After establishing the military dictatorship as the form of state it becomes possible to shadow the characteristics implemented by many representatives under this regime. The social contract theories are used to merely contrast how Hobbes and Locke interpreted a state based and the governments was of intervening in these two models. Therefore, leading this discussion to a social movement that demonstrated how these concepts interacted at one particular time in Argentinian history.

## **CONTENT OF THE INVESTIGATION**

### **Basic concepts**

This section will cover the fundamental concepts that are analyzed and compared throughout the essay. Testimonies recorded in the CONADEP about the military dictatorship allow this investigation to cover four essential terms: identity, censorship, power and social movements. The military regime was characterized for leading all of the changes that took place within these concepts given the overly strict regulations they used for society. Therefore, this allows us to understand how different facts from this historical period are a mere representation of the real-world results authors have described in the following section. Identity brings this paper to life by creating a form of backbone that connects the military dictatorship between censorship, power and social movements. This can generate a debate in social science whereby international relations focuses on political aspects and anthropology on cultural



aspects. Censorship allows us to further project the possibilities of identity at the individual and collective level; music censorship has a precise purpose in demonstrating the diversity and infinite possibilities that take place when redefining identity. Power here becomes a tool for the Argentinian military dictatorship that portrays the government's ideology in terms of identity in relation to music censorship. Finally, social movements place identity, music censorship, and power at the same levels of interaction, as if one cannot be separate from the other to fully understand the topic proposed in this study.

### **Identity.**

The central most important concept in this paper is identity, as it works to describe the construction of the self and the collective. Identity is opposite to precondition because contrary to having immutable characteristics and preexisting conditions it is in constant construction (Porta and Diani 2006, 93). This process, or construction, is the result of every individual redefining and delineating their identity through feelings of belonging to everything that surrounds them. The constant reaction of the actor's body to everything that is external, and perceived through our five senses, is a result of identity construction. Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani (2006) explain how identity works through our actions of belonging as some become reinforced and others weaken through evolving collective actions (93). Every actor has multiple identities that are placed in categories commonly known as culture, politics, religion, history, ethnicity, nationality, and anything that can be added to this list to define the self. At the same time, others are delineating their multiple identities producing diverse collective identities. One actor will never be exactly the same to another actor, but many identities are shared for multiple reasons like place of birth, family, traditions, migration and everything producing a sense of belonging. Individual identities and collective identities are in constant interaction, in the same fashion, "identity is nurtured by the hidden actions of a limited number of actors" (Porta and Diani 2006, 96). Identity becomes a

description of the “self”, which is simply what the actor is constantly redefining while interacting with the collective.

Culture is a category that allows the actor to redefine specific identities, as the institutions and reproductions built in this system of classification are constantly mimicked (Erickson and Murphy 2010, 506). The word culture seems to be commonly used to give a general impression. It is applied, or has the same meaning, in every context because of its frequent use in colloquial language. Culture, just like identity, must be deconstructed based on the points of view from which it is studied, as it has clearly been put to a side in the studies of international relations within the social sciences. Anthropology can step in to compliment this part of the analysis, as this field’s academic development has focused on exploring and interpreting the meaning of culture. Many schools and theorists have dedicated both knowledge and experience to defining culture, and finding the best methodology to study and apply this term. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz recognized that culture must be studied from the actor’s point of view, which simply refers to culture as a product of individuals trying to understand and give significance to the world around them (Erickson and Murphy 2010, 502). Thus it should never be interpreted as a generalized and abstract concept because the true essence of culture must be understood through the construction of the term when it is applied to any group of people.

Finding a sense of belonging is pertinent to our history and culture, which is both individual and collective to the “self”. To put it differently, “cultural identities are the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or structure, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture” (Hall 1996, 226). Geertz believed that culture was constructed through patterns of logic obtained by the most important elements, which organize actions, but these operate in response to our institutional interpretations that make us act distinctively (Erickson and Murphy 2010, 502). Music is a point of identification,

constructed by the self to determine the parts of culture that have been, and become, a part of personal identity. In this context, “music, like identity, is both performance and story, describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social, the mind in the body and the body in the mind” (Hall and du Gay 1996, 109). Music has been chosen in this specific context from the limitless possibilities that exist in the studies of cultural identities, and more importantly because of the censorship of music that took place in Argentina.

### **Censorship.**

Censorship is a repressive mechanism common to political transformations of dictatorial regimes across time and history. The theory reviewed earlier on military dictatorship follows a particular pattern or marionette ruling demanding the population follow tight rules incorporated into the laws or use of violence. In this particular context, censorship must be understood as an act by which there is a clear intent to restrict liberty of information and/or expression (De Los Santos Rojas 2014, 58). This term can be divided into private censorship and state censorship, but for the purpose of this essay the analysis will focus on state censorship. The act of state censorship is put to use in public order through the executive, legislative and judicial powers of the country. All forms of government to a certain extent must emphasize common identities, which many times are explained as ideologies, to reestablish the sense of belonging of the population to a set of ideas. The result of strengthening or weakening this sense of belonging continues to reconstruct common identities. In the particular case of the military dictatorial regime, state censorship had two main phases: first, suppressing all forms of cultural product and practices; second, imposing ideology by controlling the distribution of educational resources to schools, universities, and media (De Los Santos Rojas 2014, 58-59). All decisions regarding censorship were left to the Ministry of Interior that did not prohibit everything, but maintained absolute control over these procedures.

Cultural censorship characterizes a particular set of years in Argentina, which became historical facts and cultural transformations. Media, literature, film and music were spaces that created and transmitted the particulars of time and place, as stories developed. Consequently, “we all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific” (Hall 1996, 222). Only one month after the military coup took place, on April 29, 1976, the first massive book burning took place in Cordova, Argentina. Some of the contents in these burnings included novels from Gabriel Garcia Marquez, poems written by Pablo Neruda, and scientific investigations from Osvaldo Bayer (De Los Santos Rojas 2014, 59). This action started the process of censorship during the dictatorship that continued on from the Triple A in the previous government. In music, a long list of artists including Victor Heredia, Piero and Mercedes Sosa became victims of prosecution and threats resulting in their exile from Argentina for the remainder of the dictatorship. The military justified all acts of intimidation by referring to several words in the songs as radical in terms of ideology (De Los Santos Rojas 2014, 70). Therefore, state censorships intrude in the construction of the individual when confronted with the power of the state.

### **Power.**

The term power refers to the governing military group in Argentina, and the role they played in every actor’s process of redefining their individual and collective identities during a brutal political period. Evident reconstructions of identity take place, “far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (Hall 1996, 225). The word power is reintroduced from government to government based on new ideologies that characterize times of political upheaval and change. Philosopher John Locke (1986) states, “to understand political power aright, and derive it from its original, we must consider what estate all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit”

(8). The case of the dictatorial regime is clearly contradictory to Locke's explanation of the state of perfect freedom each individual must have, which allows the concept of music censorship to be analyzed years later. Locke (1986) further develops on political power to emphasize how a government must strengthen what is good for society avoiding acts of subjectivity and preference that are not in accordance with the law (77). Therefore, the interaction between the government and people reflects the many ways of relating to oneself through ideas of true and false, or permitted and forbidden (Hall and Du Gay 1996, 136). Censorship is a clear structure applied in political power to redefine individual and collective identities involuntarily to the people's real interests.

### **Social Movements.**

The military coup in 1976 marked a turning point based on political power that instilled permanent fear as a social attribute to the Argentine society. The terrorizing character of dictatorial Argentina had particular consequences, "out of fear civil society turned back in on itself in the context of a situation devoid of points of reference. In a far-reaching attempt to re-define traditional political identities, the military regime proceeded to disperse all collectivities" (Commack and Vila 1987, 132). Social movements are a form of collectivity that may appear at any time under any given circumstance, as the possibilities of finding collective identities are infinite. In this particular case, the Argentine society was confronting a time of drastic change and fear given the brutal punishments people received if they stood in opposition. For this purpose, "Social movements are forms of collective action that emerge in response to situations of inequality, oppression and/or unmet social, political, economic or cultural demands" (Gender and Social Movement, 1). Social movements appear in the case of Argentina due to the conflictual relations that exist as a counterpart to the oppressive government in the form of a collective voice. Porta and Diani (2006) detail three characteristics of social movements: "involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified

opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; [and they] share a distinct collective identity” (20). The opponents identified for the case studied include those who favored the military dictatorial government and the population that found spaces to combat the imposition of music censorship. Amongst the government opponents stood diverse groups that demonstrated their collective identity based on the musicians that became a part of their personal identity formation. In this sense, “music tastes do correlate with class cultures and subcultures; musical styles are linked to specific age groups; we can take for granted the connections of ethnicity and sound” (Hall and du Gay 1996, 120). Social movements become the representation of diverse forms of collective identity that always come to be for a specific reason, and most of the time in reaction to a strong opposing force like a dictatorial government.

## **History**

Censorship was executed in all areas of culture like music, literature, film and media. These cultural spaces transmitted the ideology and power that characterized this government. The freedom in enjoying these different areas of culture was greatly reduced, but not completely eliminated in 1974, as persecuting artists, intellectuals and union activists emerged under President Isabel Peron. Even though the military overthrew her government, the roots of music censorship began at this time with the creation of the Alianza Anticomunista Argentina (AAA) or the “triple A” (Wilson 2008, 54). José López Rega, who was given the nickname of witchdoctor, was a diligent and preserving worker of the triple A under Isabel Peron, and ran clandestine operations against these individuals as an attempt to control society. The Proceso took the informality of the AAA and transformed it into an organized and deliberate strategy, which allowed the government to gain further control over the population’s social space at different levels (Wilson 2008, 55). The social movement of rock nacional (‘national rock’) will be the central focus in understanding how music makers and listeners interacted with the

newly imposed restrictions. Within the political changes individuals managed to find spaces that allowed them to liberate and separate from repression temporarily. Rock became a part of mainstream culture in Argentina. According to Wilson (2008), “in a very few years rock music in Argentina moved from only marginal acceptance to being considered an important expression of national culture. This shift is paradoxically due in great part to its rejection and suppression by the dictators” (52). Even though a long list of censorship examples exist in music and other mentioned areas of culture, the objective of focusing on rock nacional is projected through two well-known artists Charly Garcia and Luis Alberto Spinetta. To understand the counteractions that took place between culture and power it is fundamental to understand the functions of a military dictatorship.

A debate in the field of social science continues to exist in relation to dictatorships and democracies as if they could be defined as exact opposites. This truly becomes impossible because there are several forms of dictatorships, as well as democracies, which implies a vast number of variables that must be included while contrasting the theory of dictatorships and the theory of democracies (Liden 2014, 3). For the purpose of this essay, the analysis will step away from the diverse explanations intellectuals give to these distinct forms of government, and focus specifically on the theory of military dictatorships. The reason I cover this specific theory is based on the historical facts that register this government initiated with a military coup. Further along this will be contrasted with two social contract theorists, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, through their philosophical orientation used to explain the many purposes that existed to create a state. Even though Hobbes and Locke do not stand in the exact same positions theoretically, both step away from the concepts of illogical and unnecessary forms of political aggression towards the population. Three divisions can be found under the theory of dictatorships: personalist, military and single-party. The second theory can be understood as follows, “in the dictatorships that are classified as military the influence on policy is carried

out by a group of officers where the military hierarchy is respected” (Liden 2014, 3). The officers over any military dictatorial form interact with society in five different ways: indirect-limited, indirect-complete, dual, direct and direct quasi-civilianized. The Argentine government of 1976 echoed a direct military dictatorship. This can be identified due to the following codes, “in the traditional direct rule the military governs society, often through a junta, but examples exist where the military creates a more civilized form of marionette rule” (Liden 2014, 5). As the military governed society in Argentina from 1976 to 1983 individual and collective identities interacted with policy changes at a national level forcing each and every person to redefine their identities continuously.

Reviewing music censorship during the political upheaval of Argentina’s military dictatorship emphasizes the importance of including topics such as identities into social science debates. The outcome of this repression engaged the population in a large variety of cultural transformations to adapt temporarily to the political repression they faced, and challenged a government that had instilled fear amongst their own. Around 340 detention centers around the country were used to apply the policy of the disappearance of persons, “thousands of men and women illegally deprived of their freedom passed through them, often being kept in detention for years, sometimes never returning” (CONADEP). Music during the dictatorship made artist and listeners become further engaged with the lyrics and concerts as a reaction to the oppressive government. While challenged by the pain the military authority forced on the people, music censorship did not halt the positive cultural transformations that took place individually and collectively.

### **Methodology cased in the social contract theorists**

The methodology chosen for this analysis will focus on the work of philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. This qualitative investigation is concentrated on reviewing how identity, censorship, power and social movements relate to the seventeenth-century writings



of these philosophers. With this in mind, Hobbes and Locke wrote about their particular visions of the social contract based on the time and space that directly influenced these writings, which makes their works methodological in nature. Currently, debates in International Relations refer to the democratic state as a result of the early writings of Hobbes and Locke, both social contract theorists. Even though both explanations about the social contract do not focus on a military dictatorship it provides an interesting point of comparison to the function of different forms of states. Hobbes throughout his work clearly believes in a state that maintains a strong hand over the population. This was not expressed in his work as a similarity to a military dictatorship as he defined limits or boundaries that follow the preservation of the individual. Locke has a very clear inclination to the description of a democracy characterized by limited state intervention allowing this investigation to once again compare the dictatorship with the theories that influenced our forms of states today.

Hobbes a moral and political philosopher, author of the *Leviathan*, transmits his perspective on the compatibility of human beings living together in peace by finding ways to avoid the dangers of civil conflict (Williams, 1). The brutal Thirty Years War, between the Catholics and the Protestants who fought over religious identity, portrayed the socio-political climate of the seventeenth century. Locke further debated this in his book *The Second Treatise on Civil Government*, by emphasizing, “safety and security, in civil society, for which it was first instituted, and for which only they entered into it” (Locke 1986, 53). Both philosophers’ perceptions will be applied to the analysis of music censorship in the Argentine society because they transformed political philosophy. Hence, they are continuously referenced too in diverse investigations about the creation of the state, or commonwealth, and what is expected from each actor within this system.

### **Thomas Hobbes.**

In the very beginning of the *Leviathan*, Hobbes, describes the correlation of the individual to the world around them perceived through senses that produce diversity of appearances (11). The product, “we call Sense; (for there is no conception in a mans mind, which hath not at first, totally, or by parts, been begotten upon the organs of sense.)” (Hobbes 1996, 11). Everything we capture through our senses becomes imagination because the human body is in continual change as new perceptions are constantly received. Everything we intake with our senses, “continued inwards to the brain, and heart, causeth there a resistance, and counter-pressure, or endeavor of the heart, to deliver it self: which endeavor because outward, seemeth to be some matter without” (Hobbes 1996, 11). It is through the five senses of taste, touch, sight, hearing and smelling that our nerves send this initial message to our brain that must be processed in our imagination to cause a reaction to that which is external from the body. Therefore, the result of our reactions based on sense defines the outside world, and these images are retained as memory. The particular function of retaining such information is memory, “or memory of things, is called experience. Again, imagination being only of those things which have been formerly perceived by sense, either all at once, or by parts at several times” (Hobbes 1996, 13). These experiences created through the perception of our senses are present while experiencing music, but are controlled by acts of power during the dictatorship.

Hobbes describes power as a quality that makes man beloved or feared by many, allowing the individual in power to have the assistance or service of others (50). It is through the use of power that actors of politics describe what is expected from all the people that are part of a state. These particular descriptions are formalized, “writers of politiques, add together pactions (contracts), to find men’s duties; and lawyers, laws, and facts, to find what is right and wrong in the actions of private men” (Hobbes 1996, 26). Contracts are passed from government to government, but are modified through laws and other actions to portray

particular historical and political interests at each given time. Hobbes divides power into two important categories natural powers and instrumental powers. Natural powers refer to the important faculties of the body and mind, which come naturally like strength, art, liberty, nobility and prudence (Hobbes 1996, 48). Instrumental powers are different, as they must be acquired through fortune and instruments to obtain more, such as, riches, reputation, friends and good luck (Hobbes 1996, 48). This description is particular to that cause and effect power has under any form of government given the initial intent for which it is used to secure man from each other.

### **John Locke.**

Locke explains two important points that can be applied to the basic concepts studied in this essay. The approach used for Locke in this part allows us to compare his point of view towards depicting individual freedom and power. Locke refers to the first one, as the title to perfect freedom that humans are born with, for the purpose of this is the conservation of his property. Property has a specific meaning in this context, “that is, his life, liberty, and estate, against the injuries and attempts of other men” (Locke 1986, 49). This is unquestionably opposite to the acts that took place after the military coup in 1976, which provides an interesting point of contrast to the perfect freedom humans are born with in relation to identity. The violence that characterized this historical period went against the people by destroying or at least damaging life, liberty and estate: the preservation of their life was distraught with the disappearance of 30,000 people; the denial of liberty through music, literature, art, film and media censorship; and the re-appropriation of properties that were privately owned by individuals, clearly not public property. This is applied at a larger scale because, “no political society can be, nor subsist, without having in itself the power to preserve the property” (Locke 1986, 49). The interactions of all actors in society according to Locke are built on the principles of the preservation of property and challenged by those who

cause offenses within political society. Different actors receive authority from the community to control upheavals in society of all sorts, “concerning any matter of right, and punishes those offenses which any member hath committed against the society with such penalties as the law has established” (Locke 1986, 49). However, it is important to recognize that Locke also clarified how law is a common power created for the ends of political society and government. This allows the state to punish such crimes set before the law as contrary to the preservation of property. Even though all forms of government have different ideas about the sanctions that must be applied in attempts of destroying property, this specific dictatorship turned against the ideas behind protecting property seen in the measures they took against the population.

Power, for Locke, must be used for the protection of property, and those elected to represent the population must comply with this duty. Clearly this puts the drastic sanctions applied by the authoritarian government into perspective. The power they imposed over the population clearly was not for the good of society, as it eliminated all forms of freedom. Both rulers and people must know the limits they have, “the people may know their duty, and be safe and secure within the limits of the law, and the rulers, too, kept within their due bounds, and not be tempted by the power they have in their hands to employ it to purposes” (Locke 1986, 77). The temptation to abuse power during the Argentinian dictatorship was led by transforming concepts of power applied to the making of laws, and power to punish any injury done to any member. Locke (1986) applies the first concept of power to an idealistic democracy: “power in making laws for the community from time to time, and executing those laws by officers of their own appointing” (72). Therefore, laws must be changed for the protection of the members because this gives purpose to the functioning of a state for the good of society. The punishment for attempting against the Argentinians security was brought forth in the democratic government elected by the people, after the military dictatorship. The

state, or the commonwealth, “comes by a power to set down what punishment shall belong to the several transgressions they think worthy of it, committed amongst the members of that society” (Locke 1986, 49). The validity in Locke’s writings is present in the creation of CONADEP by President Raul Alfonsin’s democratic government to bring justice to a devastated population. Once again, re-emphasizing the importance of preserving property to avoid a decreasing sense of peace and security (Locke 1986, 73). Many laws created during the military dictatorship required strict obedience in order to preserve their life, such as the measures created to reconstruct cultural identity and sanction all social movements that reacted to the new laws. The outcome of this cultural identity transformation will pass from generation to generation very similarly to political identity seen through the sequence of historical events.

### **Music censorship**

The experiences lived through music have diverse replications in our identities as we perceive sounds from the different moments we live. Following the cultural outlines of Geertz, we must observe these experiences from the actor’s point of view, as a product of social beings giving diverse meanings to the world around us which is in constant reconstruction (Erickson and Murphy 2010, 502). This section will focus on the interaction of identity in music and social movements to see the effect of music censorship when redefining identities. When applying Hobbes’ explanation of senses, music is a direct result of what we see, hear, feel, smell and taste expressed through sounds and words. Hall and du Gay (1996) deduce, “music, like identity, is both performance and story, describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social” (109). As we take into consideration the existence of a permanent interaction between the individual and the collective identity can be considered mobile. This interaction produces a constant process of becoming, that interacts in terms of music, given the experiences lived either making or listening to the art produced (Hall and du Gay 1996,

109). Each actor faces a constant progression of redefining identities, which results as a self-in-process. This merely reflects how music makers and music listeners reconstruct identities constantly based on everything that is perceived through our senses giving music the possibility of moving throughout different generations.

Each generation must be born into the same possibilities if we take into consideration the protection of property. This explanation provided by Hobbes and Locke reemphasizes the need of peace and security that must be acquired at birth. Locke referred to this as the sense of perfect freedom that each person should have in order for the state to fulfill its existence. The Argentine military dictatorship clearly unsettled the preservation of property as the central focus of political society, and disrupted all possibilities of individual actors granting power, through democratic elections, to those in authority. Therefore, music censorship became one of the many ways the authoritarian government transmitted the discourse of fear projected by the innumerable abductions, disappearances and tortures that took place.

#### **Redefining cultural identity with music censorship.**

Music is like identity when it is experienced individually and collectively by each actor through symbols that transmit feelings and emotions about the world to represent culture (Erickson and Murphy 2010, 501). The people who interact with the world around them as repeat patterns from past generations to represent culture, but transform these patterns constantly based on the time lived. The individual builds spaces where music gains a particular meaning through explainable and unexplainable experiences relating with specific perceptions, or senses. The collective, on the other hand, is built on the interactions of similar approximations to a topic and the process described through experiencing music. Hall and du Gay (1996) share a particular assumption about this art, “the experience of music for composer-performer and listener alike, gives us a way of being in the world, a way of making sense of it” (Hall and du Gay 1996, 114). In this sense, the individual is further able to

processes identity construction by experiencing music through the senses. The effect of imposing music censorship demonstrates the applicability of this concept and the possibility of molding the collective identity with censorships.

At the time the CONADEP report was elaborated, the five departments created for its elaboration had to consider ways to transmit information about torture without turning this into an encyclopedia of horror for the population. Individuals chosen by President Raúl Alfonsín, representatives from both chambers in congress and the five departments created to cover the different aspects of the commission lead this process. This idea was a clear result from the time of physical and emotional trauma that had so clearly marked the population. Investigators found this unavoidable: “After all, what else were these tortures but an immense display of the most degrading and indescribable acts of degradation, which the military governments, lacking all legitimacy in power, used to secure power over a whole nation?” (CONADEP). Power with this government clearly represented the complete opposite described by Hobbes and Locke. Though both definitions are not exactly the same, each philosopher highlights the importance of safety and protection of property. Everything we take in with our senses also represents property because feelings are individual. Under those circumstances, “we absorb songs into our own lives and rhythm into our bodies; they have a looseness of reference that makes them immediately accessible. At the same time, and equally significant, music is obviously collective” (Hall and du Gay 1996, 121). Music builds a path that takes individual identities and places them in a space of collective experiences. Hall and du Gay (1996) consider these rhythms our bodies absorb as a form of obeying a familiar cultural logic, and this idea supports the mystery of our own musical tastes (121). Ortnor (1993), emphasizing this through a perception of culture, explains that human conduct has many levels of significance (545). Every individual experiences music differently, but different groups share similar tastes in music. This allows us to step back in time, before the

report of the CONADEP, to see how the fear of torture molded both music making-performing and experiencing –listening echoed opposition to this government.

The art of music-making creates possibilities to counteract spaces of limited cultural mobility. It is important to realize, “making music is not a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them” (Hall and du Gay 1996, 111). Here we will see how the social movement of Rock Nacional counteracted these spaces with artists Charly Garcia and Juan Alberto Spinetta both well-known rock performers from before, during and after the dictatorship. Even though rock will be the focus, it is important to recognize that other spaces of music identity across the nation also confronted opposing reactions to the censorship in tango and folklore. Music took people away, as much as possible, from the torture and fear that characterizes the different testimonies provided for the CONADEP investigation, “Musical culture supplies a great deal of the courage required to go on living in the present” (Hall and du Gay 1996, 10).

#### **Social movement rock nacional defies the military dictatorship.**

Social movements are a representation of collective identities because they result in the creation of specific spaces known as counter-cultures; these can be produced by music censorship. This central approach to *rock nacional* exemplifies how collective identities counteract conflict, resist power, and redefine identity through music. One thing remains clear: “The rock movement in Argentina recognizes a fundamental fear, one which perhaps has its origins in the fate of the other youth movements at an international level, of being co-opted, exploited, or ‘turned over’ by the system” (Commack and Vila 1987, 144). Young people became highly sensitive to the constant threats they faced, but they found strength in this struggle with the subculture created in *national rock*. Identity became a collective experience because through music-making and music-listening, a social movement was created. Under these circumstances, “musical pleasure is not derived from fantasy – it is not mediated by daydreams – but is experienced directly: music gives us a real experience of



what the ideal could be (Hall and du Gay 1996, 123). In this specific context, collective identity was not only reliant on the music tastes of the actors, but the fear they lived within the Argentine state, which transformed their national, political and historical identity. Social movements provide a space shaped around the narrative structure of identity constructed within music to reflect a particular historical time. To this extent, “invented histories, invented biologies, invented cultural affinities come with every identity; each is a kind of role that has to be scripted, structured by conventions of narrative to which the world never quite managed to conform” (Hall and du Gay 1996, 23). Narratives share a common characteristic with identity because both concepts are constantly changing as they are constructed by the world each person perceives.

*National rock* developed as a phenomenon amongst the youth population in Argentina between 1976 and 1983 to counteract the government’s repressive actions. A culture of fear developed strongly for people between the ages of eighteen and thirty given 67 per cent of disappearances were reported in this age group as the highest targeted population (Commack and Vila 1987, 133). The youth movements became privileged protagonists in counteracting the culture of fear, as the need of breaking down the barriers of unjust guilty charges became a fundamental step for survival. At first sight, the phenomenon could be observed as a simple interaction between its participants, as the artist created the performance, and the public simply observed. Commack and Vila (1987) challenge this perspective by stating, “the young create and inhabit a space of their own, relatively protected from assaults of the military dictatorship (which had made them its principle victims), and has come to constitute, with the passing of the years, a counter-culture and a social movement” (129). The inside of *national rock* was described as a space where identities could be redefined by peace, freedom and participation. The outside represented the opposition to this social movement, which forced identities to be redefined through violence. According to Landi (1983), concerts are spaces

where collective identity can be constituted through a sphere of communication for the youth, “communicative practices which we Argentines sought to defend the meaning of life and of our history (81). Life, defined by Locke as property, is something individuals clearly long for, as time went on the pain of the losses they had suffered became stronger. Music became both an escape and a way to confront the pain they were obligated to live. Carlos Alberto Garcia (Charly Garcia) and Juan Alberto Spinetta wrote and performed the music that helped the youth create a long-lasting identity to these moments lived.

It was not until years after the military government was removed from power that many stories came to light about the impacts music censorship had on the lyrics of several songs that steered national rock. Lyrics made change possible, “musicians became leaders who, through the lyrics of their songs, gave form to an alternative, counter-cultural proposal which challenged the ideology of the dictatorship” (Commack and Vila 1987, 129). The forced changes in the lyrics reflected the changes that took place at the same time in culture because the governing gave little flexibility. *National rock*, as a counter-culture, became a process of negotiation seen very clearly in lyrics by Charly Garcia. Around eight years ago the original uncensored versions of the lyrics were released and classified as the Proceso-era album allowing scholars the rare opportunity to carry out a comparison of the pre- and post-censorship versions (Wilson 2008, 53). It was clear that many lyrics provided a further analysis of the inner-workings that took place to begin an initial negotiation with the government. A famous Charly Garcia song, “Alice’s song in the Country” (1980), echoes some of the lyrical tricks used to escape this repression, “We are in no man’s land, but it is mine, the innocent are the guilty, says his highness, the King of Spades.” Wilson (2008) describes how this song from Charly García’s band, Serú Girán, is amongst the most popular songs for rock history, as it would be sung, as a chant of freedom, in jam-packed soccer stadiums during the dictatorship (71). Luis Alberto Spinetta further emphasized how rock

music lasted, how it changed and modified seeming, to a certain extent, as if it went along with the instincts of transformation (Wilson 2008, 50).

The initial impact of music censorship was concentrated on musicians due to the laborious process of writing and re-writing. From Charly Garcia's perspective, "The people are expecting a kind of message, they need strength, validity, and in the lyrics we denounce things, and do all we can so that people go home turned upside down, and we don't need a message which says: 'you must do this!'" (Commack and Vila 1987, 140). Songwriters began to redefine their work into sophisticated lyrical connotations by avoiding direct descriptions (Wilson 2008, 51). National rock transmitted opposition through suggestive poetic discourse that worked around censorship creating a form of identity amongst those who deciphered the codes in music. Even though the military government made their power present through constant impositions, "another factor that accelerates the growth of musical practices is the coercion of an openly repressive government" (Wilson 2008, 52-53). This created a common identity amongst the youth because of the autonomous spaces found while experiencing music through our senses in our body. Commrack and Vile (1987) explain how the liberation of the body, protests to their surroundings, conflictual relationship to politics, "and the assumption of directly cultural character are all characteristics present in the *rock nacional* movement" (130).

A different solution to the lyrical dilemmas regarding the infinite words that became part of the censored list, which realistically was published nowhere, was Spinetta's choice to embrace instrumental music for some time (Dente, 86). There is a remarkable contrast between artists of national rock, as Spinetta decides to eliminate lyrics and transmit his emotions to the audience only with instrumental music, while Charly Garcia, with his band "Serú Girán," creates a new language that allowed him to continue speaking with his fans. As each artist adapted to the harsh reality of the military dictatorship over the years, music was

transformed in individual and collective identities with Charly Garcia and Spinetta that are greatly admired till this day around the world.

Individual identities were clearly redefined through music as the common saying of national rock repeated, 'If you are not jumping you're a soldier.' This perception exposes opposition, "violence, repression and authoritarianism (or their opposites, peace and freedom) come to be the fundamental watchwords put forward by rock during the period of military rule" (Commack and Vila 1987, 144). Music plays these particular functions in the construction of identity appreciated clearly in the social movement of *rock nacional*, which can be perceived through the possibilities and impossibilities of functioning under the power of a dictatorial government. In this social movement we can perceive a shared culture that connected the many members under one collective identity, who found a common ideology in the music that liberated them from repression. This could be understood as oppositional culture, "which not only embraces the political, economic and social orders, but also calls into question a form of conceiving the world" (Commack and Vila 1987, 146).

Shared spaces, such as concerts, are perfect places to create the possibilities that allow identification between people take place creating specific forms of identity with the music. During the dictatorship music simply became an excuse to escape not physically but mentally from the government, for this was reflected at the time songs were applauded as soon as the music started (Commack and Vila 1987, 140). Cultural identity responded to the acts of repression and torture through music as we see in the lyrics and performances that took place during the dictatorship. Most of the music released in national rock was characterized by its oppositional content, which only emphasized the critical attitude of the audiences in public spaces like concerts. It was time for the youth movements to react, "the context of the crisis of legitimacy provoked in Argentina by the emergence of successive dictatorial governments, has made itself one of the alternatives to the crisis, creating popular and channels of

participation each time that traditional channels have been closed down” (Commack and Vila 1987, 148). Though the military dictatorship was characterized by extreme use of violence, especially with the youth population, such opposition only strengthened these movements. Identity was never eliminated, but clearly transformed for and by the youth. Music became their escape as they created individual spaces of freedom.

## **CONCLUSION**

Going over the basic concepts of this essay we are able to comprehend how identities are never destroyed, but rather reconstructed continuously. I have combined identity, censorship, power and social movements to understand how this process can be interpreted during any historical period. For the purpose of social science, this becomes a fundamental procedure to understand how many cultures have adapted to unwanted political changes. The population that lived in Argentina during the military dictatorship of 1976 was forced to adapt both individual and collective identities through the imposition of fear and repression. To this extent, censorship simply became one of the fundamental tools used by the government to impose their specific interpretation of power over the entire nation. The authoritarian tendencies of this government were seen over and over again by the lack of explanation and justification given to the disappearance and death of 30,000 individuals. Censorship clearly marked this tendency, as the official documents that contained the detailed information about such prohibitions were not released publicly until years after the dictatorship had ended. Even though the official government echoed opposition to music identity, the social movement of national rock ultimately became a space of freedom and collective understanding.

In the second part, two social contract theorists, Hobbes and Locke, become the fundamental base to interpreting the government’s role in identity reconstruction. Locke’s philosophical explanation of each individual’s role within the social contract reflects the

importance of preserving property above everything. Before entering the debate between democracies and dictatorships, Hobbes provided a detailed explanation of how people interpret the world around them through the experiences the body perceives with our senses. This becomes fundamental to music identity as it allows each individual to respond to lyrics and sounds in diverse ways. Locke allowed us to further understand how these experiences are in constant interaction with freedom and power. The conservation of property is based on the title to freedom humans are born with. Therefore, Hobbes and Locke provide an array of opposing points of view in contrast with the reality Argentinians lived in during the dictatorship. The social contract theories never refer to any form of dictatorship, but they clearly allow a comparison to take place regarding what the state should be. Music was transformed over this historical period, as the artists and their audience shared common identities that allowed them to escape temporarily in the lyrics.

Even though it was a historical period marked by the cruel actions of the military and the fear of the population, music broke through these barriers with national rock. This social movement highlighted the important role music makers and music listeners had in constructing collective identities. Charly Garcia and Juan Alberto Spinetta are only two of the many examples that could be studied in detail from national rock. The music they produced over those years reflected their own individual struggles as artists. Charly Garcia's lyrics portrayed the pain and suffering the people were forced to live through as he transformed his work into a poetic interpretation using metaphors. Spinetta on the other hand, stepped away from lyrics by eliminating words from music temporarily to transmit emotion and escape. Music became an essential part of redefining identities for those who were part of national rock. Charly Garcia and Spinetta are still commonly listened to and talked about amongst individuals and groups of people that listen to rock. Music, during the military dictatorship, had the ability to embrace and hold moments of cultural interpretation that cannot be written

in a human rights report like CONADEP. Individual and collective identities counteracted music censorship as the performers and their audience dug further into their feelings and emotions by reacting to the abuse of power they lived.

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