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The Everyday Bogans: Identity and Community amongst Heavy Metal Fans

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
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Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

The University of Waikato
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2012

ABSTRACT

Since the mid-twentieth century some social psychologists have demarcated communities as static entities; conceptual and physical boundaries were placed around communities to facilitate scholarly analysis. This theoretical and methodological bias is contrasted against the consideration of the dynamic flow of communities and, by association, identity formation. The application of social interactionism provides one method through which to remedy the partiality of preferred approaches to community as practised in contemporary social psychology. Opening up analysis to the consideration of processes of communing exposes the interconnection of identity and community, symbiosis that develops through social interactions across places via the creative use of music and material objects. Evidence collected through auto-ethnographic engagement with New Zealand Heavy Metal fans clarifies the complex associations that shape and maintain individual identity and community associations. Social ties are negotiated and maintained across online and offline spaces, through personal interactions and shared experiences, via object recognition, and threshold maintenance. Social psychological research needs to return to early works of psychology and symbolic interactionism to account more fully for the complex and emplaced nature of identity and community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While wanting to avoid cheesy metaphors of journeys, rollercoasters, or even onion layers, this thesis has been a difficult process. As with anything I do, or have done, I owe a great deal to a great many for their support. I am very grateful and would like to thank them all. In particular I would like to thank:

My supervisors, particularly Darrin, whose continued support in this thesis, and my career, have been greatly appreciated. Darrin's support in all aspects of this study and my career has been nothing short of amazing. Also thank you to Colin for his insightful feedback on my drafts and resources on issues of a musical and geographic nature. Thanks also to Peter Gibbons, for his sage advice during the final stages of this project. I am also grateful to my colleagues: Amanda Young-Hauser, Hannah Merdian, Shiloh Groot, and Wen Li for their comments and support during this research. This thesis would also not be possible without the financial support of the Tertiary Education Commission.

I would also like to thank my family. We have been through a great deal and their unconditional love has always been a source of strength. Thank you to my Mum, Olwyn, for her ability to put up with my rants, to my sister Marie for her continued support, and particularly to my Dad, Rex, for putting that first *AC/DC* tape into the car stereo when I was 12 years old – I hope you realise you are ultimately responsible (to blame?) for all of this. This thesis is also dedicated to Stella “Jonesy” Snell for her love and support.

“We did it”

To my partner Nina for her encouragement, tolerance, and for keeping me sane – thank you. You've done so much for me and you do not even realise it. Thanks also to my friends for never letting me give up the 12 year old boy's mentality of air guitar and singing in front of a mirror.

This study is also dedicated to my research participants: Architect, Chopper, Death, Drummer, Filf, Flash Medallion, H.O.B., Misery, Miss Raven, Nail, Ripper, Space Ghost, and *Slayer* Fan. Without your help, support, and encouragement none of this would have been possible. Also thank you to those who provided additional comments and photographs.

Finally, to anyone who has ever thought that drinking beer, growing a mullet, and listening to Metal was a good idea – this one's for you!

We don't need their laws together we destroy
And I won't let them ruin the one thing I enjoy
Tonight's the night we finally get to rip this place apart
And this is how we turn your boring party into art!

Taken from the song "The Art of Partying" by *Municipal Waste* (2007)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In the year 2000, I moved from a small rural settlement to a larger provincial town. Being new to the area, I did not know anyone very well. As a way of meeting people I went online using my flatmate's computer and an online chat programme called ICQ.¹ I created a personal profile, stating some of my interests and favourite bands, one of which was *Nine Inch Nails*.² One day while using this programme, I received an online message from someone that was a quote from a *Nine Inch Nails* song. The name of this person was unfamiliar, but I decided to reply with a lyric quote of my own. The exchanges of song lyrics continued, and then we moved into online conversations about other topics. This person had searched ICQ for local people who were, like himself, fans of *Nine Inch Nails* and had decided to start a conversation. One Saturday while in a local bar, a guy walked past me wearing a *Nine Inch Nails* T-shirt. I approached him and started a conversation and discovered that this was the person that I had been conversing with online. We kept in touch, went to concerts together, and regularly socialised together at that same bar. He became, and remains, one of my closest friends.

This autobiographical anecdote illustrates the theories and concepts that are at the core of this research project. The incident reveals a complex set of relationships and interactions that are taken-for-granted as they are a part of everyday life. My experience, as I have described it, includes online and offline interactions that involve identity, media, material objects, and places. As a musical form, Heavy Metal provides opportunities for interactions with other listeners, and constitutes a resource for identity and community. Processes such as these encompass experiences of everyday life which are complex but often unquestioned, viewed simply as "just the way we do things". Examined critically, however, everyday life can be shown to consist of a number of distinct and inter-related elements.

¹ The name ICQ is a shortened form of "I seek you" (see www.icq.com).

² In order to provide greater clarity for those unfamiliar with Heavy Metal music, within this thesis all band names are in italics, all song titles in quotation marks, and all album names are underlined.

As a framework for a critical examination of the inter-related processes of identity and community in everyday life, this thesis utilises a symbolic interactionist approach. Symbolic interactionism involves consideration of the interactional construction of self and community in everyday life. These interactions include not only those involving other people, but also places and objects (Blumer, 1969). This study focuses on a group of Heavy Metal fans who are interacting with each other online through social networking sites and offline across a range of places such as bars, concerts, and domestic dwellings. My research project has three aims: (1) to explore the ways in which social identities are negotiated and expressed in the day-to-day lives of thirteen Heavy Metal fans; (2) to document the ways in which social ties are negotiated and maintained across both online and offline sites for community; and (3), to provide a comprehensive understanding of community life in contemporary New Zealand society by analysing the experiences and practices of Heavy Metal fans. I employ an auto-ethnographic methodology incorporating interviews, photographs, web-audits, and direct observation, to investigate the performance of identity through participation in community practices and through material displays. In doing so, I have found that my participants use Heavy Metal music and related experiences to develop, embody, and mobilise a social identity. They draw upon an imagined Metaller community to foster symbolic and physical interactions with others across routinely experienced online and offline places.

My research is an example of a recent shift in the discipline of social psychology towards the investigation of communal processes of identity formation and maintenance in everyday life, particularly via practices and material objects (e.g., Jovchelovitch, 2007). Multiple topic areas are utilised through the application of concepts and examples from a range of academic disciplines. This includes psychological approaches to identity and community; media approaches to audience sub-cultures; sociological thought on material culture and everyday life; and writing from cultural geography and environmental psychology on place. Drawing upon a range of social science disciplines provides insights that are not available in any one discipline, and has enabled me to enrich present understandings of processes of identity and community formation.

This introductory chapter is presented in five sections. The first section, *A symbolic context for the research: Bogans, the media, and moral panics* discusses the sub-cultural genealogy of Heavy Metal fans (referred to in this section as Bogans) and their social positioning. I review the role of the media, including musical and information sharing formats, in the construction of personal and shared identities and sense of community of Bogans. The second section, *Contestations of meaning: The case for Heavy Metal* then outlines various definitions of Heavy Metal music and the difficulties involved in categorising such a living cultural form. In the third section, *Conceptualising identity and community*, I explore the concepts of identity and community, with a particular focus upon the interactional nature of these concepts. I investigate three key areas of research in the sharing of media-based identities: sub-cultures, fandom, and community. The fourth section of the Introduction, *Performing identity and community: Practices, objects, bodies, and places*, explains the role of human action or practice in the development of personal and social identities. Central to this particular section is a social psychological conceptualisation of place and material objects as pivotal elements of a person's sense of self. This is especially relevant to my participants, as social interactions are used to construct and develop their identities and membership to a Heavy Metal community. The section also considers the role of material objects, such as concert souvenirs, as forms of sub-cultural capital, as these objects are used within communities to advertise community membership and identity. Finally, *Thesis structure* sets out the sequence of exposition for the other chapters of the thesis.

A symbolic context for the research: Bogans, the media, and moral panics

This section of the Introduction describes the origins and nature of Bogans, and discusses how some members of society do not consider them to be a social group worthy of academic investigation. I also highlight how such negative views can be challenged by members of socially marginalised groups, and how alternative perceptions of them can be cultivated through the media (Snell & Hodgetts, 2008). The practices surrounding the active consumptions and reconstructions of various media forms for use in everyday life constitute a core component of this thesis. It is

central to my argument that the media is an ever present entity in society today, and an important symbolic context through which people construct themselves and others (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2007). Contemporary identities are often represented, reconstructed, and challenged in face-to-face interactions and via various forms of media (Hodgetts et al., 2010a).

Finding an adequate definition of Bogans is a difficult task. Bogans are frequently portrayed in media reports as dim-witted, uncultured, and unworthy of serious academic study (“Bogan fights outrageous myths”, 2007). This is highlighted by the quotation below, taken from a recently published New Zealand book, *A Guide to Kiwi Blokes*, which provides semi-jocular characterisations of various national male stereotypes:

The Bogan is a coarse, crass and crude, and raw, rough and rude member of the New Zealand underclass. An indelible part of the national psyche, with a strong belief that blood, sweat and beers will bring him respect, and, with that, a sense of belonging ... With interests such as loud music, loud women and loud cars, a rather grungy aspect, the capacity to consume copious quantities of bourbon, and always sporting some form of unkempt facial hair growth, the Bogan exemplifies the uncouth, yet at the same time unsophisticated, lifestyle that many others only dream of (Ellis & Haddrell, 2010, p. 17).

In the quotation, the authors typify a common view of New Zealand Bogans. While the entry is largely complimentary, it still implies irresponsible behaviour, often associated with excessive alcohol consumption (Brown & Brown, 2005). The extract invokes a number of key aspects of “Boganism”, including alcohol, loud music, masculinity, and powerful cars, many of which are perceived as part of an “unsophisticated lifestyle”. These elements are also commonly associated with white, working class males in New Zealand, and so the term Bogan is frequently used to describe this group. The term is employed for similar males in Australia. Further, those designated, or who self-identify, as Bogans are customarily associated with Hard Rock and Heavy Metal music, and are understood as having

a distinctive appearance. This frequently includes wearing black jeans, band T-shirts, while some also have mullet hairstyles³ (Pollock, 2010).

Figure 1 provides an illustration of a pair of self-identifying New Zealand Bogans at a Rock bar in Hamilton, New Zealand. Given a paucity of publications, it is difficult to trace a clear chronology linking the development of Bogan culture with the emergence of Heavy Metal music in New Zealand. Musical trends and genres in New Zealand have largely followed those of other countries, with performers producing local versions of overseas genres, and particularly focusing on Pop or Rock music (Shuker & Pickering, 1994). Below, I provide a brief history of Anglo-American inspired rock music in New Zealand as it relates to the emergence of Bogans. In doing so, I enact the construction of social psychology as history suggested by Gergen (1973), whereby cultural and historical contexts are important contextual considerations for research. History and context are central to the formation and development of identities in everyday life (Gergen, 2006). Trends in music are important, as they highlight how wider macro systems relating to mass culture are utilised for identity through everyday practice.

³ The mullet is a hairstyle that is short at the front and sides, and long in the back. This hairstyle was mostly popular in the 1980s (Wikipedia, 2010d).



Figure 1. New Zealand Bogans

The mid 1950s was a time of considerable social change in New Zealand, particularly in relation to youth cultures. Government sponsored research, such as the Mazengarb report⁴, depicted a shift by New Zealand's teenagers towards what were described as acts of juvenile delinquency. Such acts included an increase in "carnal knowledge" and "indecent" offences. The Mazengarb report made recommendations to the New Zealand Parliament, suggesting that the cause of this increase in juvenile delinquency included radio broadcasters playing "suggestive love songs" and that these broadcasters needed to maintain a higher level of moral responsibility. These social changes were associated with "threats" posed by communism, the influence of "loose" American morals, and the rise of popular culture (Bourke, 2010). Shifts in youth cultures and related symbols can be explained as surface manifestations of underlying codes (*cf.* Giddens, 1984). Social changes in New Zealand were often viewed by authorities as localised versions of global threats that were "made real", for example, the teen-cultures of "bodgies" (for males) and

⁴ The Mazengarb report was written by the New Zealand government's Special Committee on Moral Delinquency and was released to the public in 1954. Its aim was to document the extent of "juvenile delinquency" in New Zealand. Political commentators have noted that this was primarily an attempt to frame the rise of such anti-social behaviour as a major political issue by the conservative government prior to an up-coming election (Bourke, 2010).

“widgies” (for females) (Yska, 1993). Bodgies were similar to Teddy Boys in the United Kingdom, identifiable by brylcreemed hair, drainpipe trousers and high-collared shirts, and a strong association with Rock music (Wikipedia, 2010a). The popularity of Rock music in New Zealand was firmly established in the later 1950s and reached new heights in the 1960s, with the British group *The Beatles* a significant influence on local performers. For example, *Ray Columbus and the Invaders* were one of the most popular New Zealand bands of the time and, like *The Beatles*, all band members wore identical suits for public appearances. This choice of clothing changed in the late 1960s, with bands following the overseas trend towards the wearing of denim and leather. This period was also characterised by a change in radio formatting, with increasing numbers of local radio stations dedicating their playlists to New Zealand Rock music (Dix, 2005).

Such shifts in choices of appearance and clothing marked a movement away from the clean cut image of earlier Rock bands to those associated with a more casual and working class image that continued into the 1970s, when the term counter-culture became firmly entrenched in New Zealand music. Many local bands became greatly influenced by Punk music from the United Kingdom (Dix, 2005). As part of the do-it-yourself attitude of Punk music, New Zealand bands moved away from stage costumes to embrace the idea of wearing everyday clothes for everyday musicians. Thus, bands such as *The Scavengers* and *The Suburban Reptiles* popularised wearing jeans, T-shirts, or singlets while performing. In the aftermath of the Punk movement, a number of Thrash Rock/Metal bands emerged in the 1980s. These bands included *Flesh D-Vice* from Wellington, *Knightshade* from Hamilton, and *Sticky Filth* from New Plymouth.

In New Zealand, the visibility of Hard Rock and Heavy Metal music was enhanced by the establishment of radio stations such as The Rock. Broadcasting nationally across New Zealand, The Rock’s playlist consists mostly of Hard Rock and Heavy Metal songs. This musical focus is accompanied by audio and Internet content around “chicks” and “boys’ toys”, with the station enjoying sponsorship from alcohol wholesalers and car retailers.⁵ The Rock sponsors Hard Rock concerts, releases compilation albums, and also supports traditionally male orientated events such as

⁵ See www.therock.net.nz for examples.

stunt motorcycle riding. These are also aspects strongly associated with traditional male working class European New Zealand (sometimes referred to as Pakeha) culture (Phillips, 1996), which appears to be The Rock's target audience.

Despite The Rock, most national radio stations play a broader range of more commercially successful music such as Pop.⁶ Radio New Zealand has stated that “[t]he radio industry is committed to the development and broadcast of New Zealand music which meets the broad appeal tastes of the majority of our listeners” (as cited in Shuker & Pickering, 1994, p. 274). This suggests that the radio industry caters for a mainstream audience, rather than the smaller Heavy Metal fan base. There is rarely a Heavy Metal song in the Recording Industry Association of New Zealand's Top 40, with the current chart at the time of writing featuring either Pop music⁷ or Hip Hop influenced singles (Recording Industry Association of New Zealand, 2010). This lack of exposure on radio and television also means that Heavy Metal bands are offered few financial resources, and most have to finance their own recordings and organise tours without the support of large record companies or experienced promotion agencies. Thus, contemporary New Zealand Heavy Metal bands such as *Sinate*⁸ operate on the fringes of the New Zealand music industry. As a consequence, they require alternative forms of media and performance to gain exposure – for example, Internet content on Youtube.

Heavy Metal's fringe status within popular culture is mirrored in perceptions of research about its fans. The allocation of public funds for social science research, particularly concerning fringe groups, is subject to public scrutiny via news media. Past examples of such “scandals” include research into Hip Hop music (Devereux & Beston, 2004) and the history of sex and the female orgasm (“PM Seeks Details on Academic Funding ‘Corruption’”, 2006). It is as if journalists have a preconceived story template - when annual research funding is announced, a new headline is created to reflect the research topic, stock characters are inserted in the appropriate

⁶ Pop is a broad genre of music, traditionally aimed at youth, which is commercially recorded and consists of relatively short, simple songs. Music within this genre often samples or rearranges existing music (Wikipedia, 2010e).

⁷ For an example of Pop music see *LMFAO*'s “Party Rock Anthem” at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQ6zr6kCPj8>. At the time of writing this was the number one song on the aforementioned New Zealand music chart.

⁸ For an example see *Sinate*'s “Prekill” at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYWHSQhBIOo>.

places, and the story is published. These practices, where stories containing similar elements are rewritten to feature new examples of existing plot lines, are known as media templates (Kitzinger, 1999). Media templates are often used by journalists and audiences to quickly communicate and interpret emerging events, for example the allocation of public funds (*cf.* Edy & Daradanova, 2006). The media “scandals” noted above utilised a similar financially-orientated story framework (Snell & Hodgetts, 2008). These stories focused on the presumed misuse of public funds to support what were considered to be fringe projects of limited social benefit while other, worthier causes were assumed to be going without funds. The misuse template is a commonly used and easily understood model as it presents clear links between causes, effects, and solutions. In this instance, the cause of social problems, such as long surgical waiting lists, can be attributed to money being supposedly wasted on social science research - with the solution being the redirection of public money. This template also features common characters including politicians, funding authorities, socially undesirable characters, and “quirky” or otherwise marginal academic researchers.

My own research project was reported in a similar fashion to previous “scandals”. Central to the controversy surrounding the current project was the characterisation of Bogans as being unworthy of serious academic study (Snell & Hodgetts, 2008). As an academic who chose to conduct research with this group, I was portrayed as being quirky and self absorbed. This was highlighted when a Tertiary Education Commission scholarship for the present research was awarded (27th March, 2007). The finance minister at that time, Dr Michael Cullen, announced the scholarships as underpinning the New Zealand knowledge economy and as being a benefit to New Zealand both socially and economically (Joseph, 2007). The focus of media reports of the scholarship on the terms Bogan and taxpayers’ money (e.g., Taylor, 2007) provoked public debate in which this present research project was used by some as an example of what was wrong with government funding priorities. A Waikato member of New Zealand parliament, Dr Paul Hutchison, stated on National radio that he would “wait with bated breath to see how [this research] transforms the New Zealand economy” (Drummond, 2007, p. 7). Following these initial statements, news reports during the subsequent few weeks employed the misuse template and portrayed this research project as yet another example of the government wasting taxpayer money on dubious projects. Such statements highlight how public debates

surrounding the use of public funds to support academic research are fiercely contested and can fuel dialogue between competing political interests (Fenton et al., 1998).

Berkowitz and Terkeurst (1999) propose that the use of the media by powerful political forces can reduce opportunities for wider public debate and the voicing of alternative perspectives in the media, particularly by marginalised groups. Those with the greater number of resources and politically dominant views have greater opportunities than the marginalised to voice their opinions and to have their perspectives emphasized (Thorson, 2006). Consequently, the news media may be viewed as a closed system controlled by politically and economically dominant forces (Cottle & Rai, 2006). This understanding results in some academics and representatives of marginalised groups avoiding news media so as not to “get burnt” by exploitative journalists (Fenton et al., 1998).

Conceptualising news media as a form of propaganda in relation to the reproduction and impact of reports can:

blind analysts to the complexities of journalism’s communicative architecture as well as its democratizing possibilities. Simply put, there is more going on in the communication of news than the manipulation of news agendas by powerful strategic interests or the circulation of powerful semiotic codes and agendas (Cottle & Rai, 2006, p. 164).

Although those who are more politically or socially dominant may have more opportunities to present their views through news media, this does not eliminate the possibility of marginalised communities using similar methods. Hodgetts and colleagues (2008) found that over the past decade New Zealand journalists have reflected critically on the role of political spin in news production, and have frequently resisted the agenda setting activities of powerful political groups by advocating for marginalised groups. By consciously acting in favour of marginal groups, the New Zealand media has reflected critically on the role of political spin in news production (Hodgetts et al., 2008). It is important, therefore, to not become overly pessimistic about the influence of political elites on the openness of news processes. There can be a space for groups with a limited media voice, such as Bogans, to employ media

releases and other forms of media contact to communicate their opinions to a wide audience.

News media develop representations that do more than re-marginalise specific social groups (*cf.* Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2003). Media can promote social inclusion and facilitate dialogue through the creation of a forum for public debate around issues of inclusion and participation. Silverstone (2007) has introduced the idea of the mediapolis to identify spaces of mediated debate in which civil society is increasingly located due to the pervasiveness of the media. Drawing on the ancient Greek concept of *polis*, a shared civic space of face-to-face interaction, Silverstone (2007) argues that the mediapolis describes interpersonal interactions which are no longer anchored in a specific material place such as at a public meeting in a town hall:

Contemporary media enable a face-to-faceness which, both in broadcast and interactive modes (and of course the differences are not insignificant), involves the coming together of speech and action and albeit in the symbolic realm of mediated representation, they reproduce, though of course in an intensely technologically mediated form, the discursive and judgmental space of the polis. Like the polis this mediated space is often, indeed mostly, elitist and exclusive. Like the polis it depends on visibility and appearance, performance and rhetoric. The world and its players appear in the media ... Increasingly what passes for public life in contemporary societies takes place, more or less exclusively, on the screen (Silverstone, 2007, pp. 29-31).

In considering the mediapolis as a public space for political life, Silverstone (2007) invokes a notion of people engaging via media in a regulated but pluralistic symbolic space inherently interwoven with the physical world. Thus, not only do people observe and learn about Bogan through television or newspapers, but they can also have conversations and may debate these representations with others.

Participation in the mediapolis helps increase and refine community participation in shaping an issue, while at the same time assisting news media in becoming more representative, substantive, and responsive (*cf.* Wallack, 2003; Wallack et al., 1999). In this way, news media may be understood as a site for conversation rather than

simply an information resource (Hodgetts et al., 2008). Such journalism of conversation gives journalists broader responsibilities than the objectivity and neutrality that is often mentioned in discussions concerning news media (Snell & Hodgetts, 2008). Instead, journalists' responsibilities become those of inclusion and representation, providing audiences with a forum through which to engage in public debate surrounding social issues. Framing stories as conversation involves journalists reflecting on the ways in which events are being presented, groups are characterised, and who is excluded in shaping an evolving story (*cf.* Edy & Daradanova, 2006). Cottle & Rai (2006) argue that this method of framing stories aims to generate insights into news events by providing a contextualised and detailed account of the situation, often including first hand testimony by those directly affected. For example, a later opinion piece regarding this research by a journalist and self confessed Bogan presented a "defense of a lifestyle" (Suddaby, 2007, p. E2) and challenged stereotypes of Bogans evident in previous news reports on the awarding of the scholarship. Items such as this provide meta-commentaries on the evolving scholarship story, and offer opportunities for alternative perspectives to enter the mediapolis (Snell & Hodgetts, 2008).

In order to insert an alternative perspective on my research, my chief supervisor Darrin Hodgetts and I decided to actively participate in the mediapolis. Research on the mediation of social science suggests that when efforts are made by scholars to engage with journalists, both groups can benefit in terms of extending public deliberations over issues of social concern and in regard to public characterisations of fringe groups (Fenton et al., 1998). The exposure generated through the attention of national politicians to the award of the scholarship for the project resulted in news outlets contacting myself and Darrin. Interviews with journalists enabled us to put them in contact with members of the Heavy Metal community, individuals who were able to offer alternate perspectives regarding Heavy Metal culture and the research project. The story was extended through newspaper editorials, commentaries, and letters, where competing views from various stakeholders were expressed in detail.

Coverage of the controversy related to my project culminated in a television current affairs item and subsequent response letters, expressions which illustrate the extension of the mediapolis into daily life and web-based arenas. Within the first month of media reports about the awarding of the scholarship, Darrin and I were

approached by representatives from the television programme *20/20*.⁹ These representatives were interested in presenting a more detailed account of my research than had previously been provided by brief news reports. We decided to use this opportunity to attempt a form of media advocacy whereby we would use the *20/20* appearance to promote the cultural relevance of the study and, in doing so, address negative stereotypes which many people held about the Heavy Metal community. In order to do this, a musical event was organised to introduce the staff of the *20/20* programme to Bogans who did not fit the scruffy and unintelligent stereotype. Three local Heavy Metal bands played at the University of Waikato, free of charge, and the event was promoted through local newspapers and radio.

In engaging with the medapolis through *20/20* we had three themes we wished to promote. Firstly, in response to Dr Paul Hutchison's comment that this research would not benefit New Zealand's knowledge economy, we wanted to propose that not everything is about the economy. Hutchison may be understood as arguing that the knowledge economy is purely about financial considerations, a position that subordinates other areas of research such as those concerning aesthetics and society. These kinds of perceptions overlook the importance of culture and identity in everyday life. Our second message was to communicate the scholarly merit and intellectual significance (both local and international) of the project, as well as my academic ability. In order to alleviate concerns that the awarding of a Top Achiever Scholarship was "conning the taxpayer", it was important to communicate the competitive nature of the scholarships and the level of academic achievement required by successful applicants. The third theme was that Bogans are a cultural group worthy of academic study. Bogan is one identity that people construct and develop. By including people who did not fit the negative stereotype of this group, we hoped to show that this group is more common and diverse than previous media portrayals had depicted.¹⁰

⁹ *20/20* is an American television news show that focuses more on human interest stories than political subjects. In New Zealand a 60-minute local version of *20/20* is screened. The New Zealand version relies on twelve-minute segments of both locally and internationally produced stories (see <http://abcnews.go.com/2020>).

¹⁰ To view the *20/20* segment, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDU1LtsG8Qw>.

As a result of the *20/20* programme, community participation in my research increased. For example, several members of the Heavy Metal community approached me through both email and face-to-face encounters, offering direct contributions or other forms of input into the research. The reactions from non-Bogans were also largely positive, although some continued to view the research as a waste of money. In this way, public deliberations regarding the relevance of such research become more conversational, in that they provided two different positions in an ongoing debate, as was illustrated by a response to the *20/20* story:

Dear *20/20*,

As a mum and a human, I am absolutely disgusted that a man who chooses to study Bogans is payed [sic] \$96,000 over three years to do so. This is outrageous. That is more money than an average New Zealander will ever see in three years yet all this man has to do is research a minute proportion of our society - research which will in no way better our society what so ever [sic]. \$96,000 could go to much better use i.e. medical research, saving lives, cancer research, care for the elderly or charity. But instead, society gets a thesis on Bogans.

- Concerned mum.

Concerned mum's letter confirmed a view of Bogans as a small New Zealand group, "a minute proportion of our society", that it was unnecessary to research. This view was challenged by those who contacted me upon seeing Concerned mum's letter on my personal social networking site. Below are two examples of these emails:

Poor sociology; if the sciences were X-Men, sociology would be Cyclops. It's essential and dependable, but everyone else hates it for reasons they don't themselves understand (Joshua, personal communication, 14 May, 2007).

anthropology works on the study of cultures and sub-cultures. To understand society is key to understanding evolution. That's why I will help if poss! (Small Child™, personal communication, 10 May, 2007).

These two responses to Concerned Mum highlighted perceptions of the research by the community concerned. The *20/20* item resulted in discussions across social

groups, both Bogan and non-Bogan, regarding stereotypes. Dean, for example, reported on the responses of his non-Bogan workmates to my research:

[They said] that it seems a waste of money and resources until I point out some of the other studies being carried out and what the text books you mentioned in your blog were saying. Then I ask if they think I fit the description and if some other people that we both know fit it. Not one person so far has thought that we fit the description and all seem surprised when I tell them I'm a Bogan (Dean, personal communication, 13 May, 2007).

Dean's email contested the stereotypes of Bogans as unintelligent and unaware. Dean demonstrated his ability to combine academic literature with interpretations of the television segment, along with comments in my online blog about past academic research on Heavy Metal music. He has then applied them in a discussion with other employees at his work about his own Bogan identity.

Public discussions concerning Bogans and Heavy Metal music often make reference to the lyrical themes and the emotional reaction they elicit ("Best and Brightest Tune into 'Brutal' Death Metal and Thrash Bands, says Study", 2007). While public deliberations provide opportunities for media advocacy aimed at challenging stereotypes of Bogans, media reports do not fully account for everyday use of music by fans, an issue central to this thesis. Some social science research concerning music follows a "hypodermic needle" approach to media consumption, where music is treated as texts used to transfer ideas and traditions (e.g., Carney, 1974; Ford, 1971). These studies frequently aim to ascertain messages from lyrics and to investigate the role of media in the dissemination and reproduction of such messages (*cf.* Newcomb, 1982). Such work also focuses on interpreting specific song lyrics that are often presumed to have a negative effect on young and vulnerable people (e.g., Gore, 1987; King, 1985). This kind of focus is largely the outcome of the origins of these studies in publically expressed concerns about music. Thus, a specific music genre comes to be associated with negative social issues such as substance misuse, youth suicide, mass murder, and devil worship (Walser, 1993).

The discourses that followed the death of 14 people at Columbine High School in the United States provide a well-publicised example of the public's perceptions of Heavy Metal lyrics. In April 1999, two Columbine students shot and killed 14 people, including themselves (Basu, 2010). Media reports discussed the shooters' enjoyment of Heavy Metal music as being related to the motives for the shootings (e.g., Powers, 1999). These media reports were used in evidence by concerned parental groups to portray Heavy Metal music as dangerous (Walser, 1993). Such narrowly focused and ideologically loaded reporting has contributed to what Fischhoff (1999) has referred to as a *fundamedia attribution error*. This error describes the tendency for media (music, film, text) to be treated as a negative influence external to society that can be blamed for the prevalence of social problems and the manipulation of vulnerable youth. For example, Heavy Metal music is identified as a cause of youth suicide despite the fact that millions of fans appreciate Heavy Metal without harm (Walser, 1993). It also neglects to consider how audiences actively engage with, appropriate, and reconstruct products of the media industry for local purposes (Hodgetts et al., 2010a).

The positioning of fans of Heavy Metal music as uncultured trouble makers who listen to socially unacceptable music may also be conceptualised as resulting from the cultural hierarchies that differentiate between high and popular culture. Under this model, for example, classical music is viewed as high culture that is superior to other musical forms. This superiority is based on an understanding that classical music has a long history, it maintains long-standing methods of instruction, and that it adheres to formal requirements of skill and virtuosity. Some individuals who enjoy classical music see themselves as more intelligent and of a higher moral standing than listeners of other musical forms (Small, 1987). Williams (1961) argued that the selection of high cultural artefacts is "related to and even governed by the interests of the class that is dominant" (p. 308). This understanding may be linked to the view that media-based culture is "less something that *is* than something that *was*" (Levine, 1988, p. 251; emphases in original). Culture is positioned as a product of the old leisured classes, resulting in the holders of this view wanting to defend their position against perceived new and destructive forces such as popular culture (Williams, 1961). For example, Levine (1988) discussed how proponents of these traditional views conceptualise culture as:

created by the few for the few, threatened by the many, and imperilled by democracy; the conviction that culture cannot come from the young, the inexperienced, the untutored, the marginal; the belief that culture is finite and fixed, defined and measured, complex and difficult of access, recognizable only by those trained to recognize it, comprehensible only to those qualified to comprehend it (p. 252).

Thus, to know about and engage with high cultural products is to be cultured; to be uninterested in or oblivious to such artefacts is to be uncultured. Such positioning is illustrated through the news reports of this research discussed earlier, framing Bogans as dim-witted, shiftless, and uncultured. In this way, fans of music such as Heavy Metal are positioned as culturally inferior to listeners of other forms of music (Walser, 1993).

Instead, along with other researchers (e.g., Walser, 1993), I propose that Heavy Metal music is as equally worthwhile as other genres of music. It is a resource for identity and community participation that Bogans use which permeates their everyday life in symbolic and tangible ways (*cf.* Breen, 1991). As Levine (1988, p. 256) states:

In defining and redefining the contours of culture ... we are dealing with lives and minds; we are dealing with people, and we owe them no less than the adoption of an open search for and a careful understanding of what culture has been in our past and can become in our future.

What is needed then is a holistic approach to the functions of media in everyday life, including the formation and maintenance of fan-based mediated communities. With this in mind, the present research views listeners of Heavy Metal music as a community that is an important part of fans' everyday lives and, as a result, plays an important role in their social interactions.

Such discussions of media representations and cultural hierarchies regarding Bogans and Heavy Metal music highlight the dialectical processes through which identities and communities are constructed and positioned within society (*cf.* Hermans, 2001). The media reports regarding a Bogan identity, along with political debates regarding the worthiness of this study, show that this community negotiates

its identity through public deliberations in everyday life. Bogans do not have complete freedom in how they are represented and characterised by society. Instead they negotiate, resist, and attempt to alter how their public persona is understood by outsiders (*cf.* Hodgetts et al., 2010a). My discussion of my own experiences with the media within this section illustrates how I did this when my own identity as both academic and Bogan were challenged. By engaging with the media, I was attempting to resist certain aspects that were previously identified in news reports (for example social irresponsibility) and attempt to offer my own portrayals that were more positive (such as emphasising community) (*cf.* Fenton et al., 1998). Those who had viewed the media coverage, both Bogan and non-Bogan, also attempted to have their own input. For example Concerned Mum speaking of her outrage to *20/20* or Dean debating a Bogan identity with his workmates. This highlights how both symbolic (the media) and physical spaces (such as the workplace) overlap in the construction and negotiation of identity in everyday life (*cf.* Livingstone, 2007; Silverstone, 1999).

Such public deliberations reflect an ongoing, dialectical construction of a Bogan identity that functions through the routine interactions of community members across places. This is a key theme throughout this study, and this theme will be revisited throughout later sections to illustrate the dynamic and relational nature of identity and community (*cf.* Hermans, 2001; Liu et al., 2010). This was evident in some of my research participants wanting to shift the discussion of a Heavy Metal identity away from the term Bogan and towards a discussion of Metallers because of negative public perceptions that were associated with the former. As a result of their discomfort, during the course of this thesis I changed the term I used to describe the Heavy Metal community to Metallers. This was a term that all my participants agreed was an appropriate designation. In some interview extracts, contained within my Analysis chapters, participants have used the term Bogan and Metallers interchangeably to describe Heavy Metal fans; in the interest of accuracy in my participants' transcripts, this has not been altered. While many participants resisted the term Bogan, others embraced it, further reflecting the dialogical and interpretive nature of identity. In shifting my labelling of this group, I will now explore the Heavy Metal community's own definitions of its music and fans.

Contestations of meaning: The case for Heavy Metal

Over the last thirty years there have been innumerable attempts to ... explain ... the concept of metal music. All of them have been largely pointless exercises in semantics...ultimately you have to call aggressive guitar-based music something a little easier on the tongue (unless you wish to spend the rest of your life mumbling in your beer like a wittering fool) ... But who cares what you call it, eh? If you like big guitars, fast guitars, scary guitars or a sense of theatre to your music then there's likely to be a little bit of metal in your soul (Ingham, 2002, p. 8).

In describing rigid definitions as being “largely pointless”, Ingham (2002) suggests that characterisations of musical genres are problematic. While many point to the reliance on guitars and a sense of the theatrical in defining Heavy Metal (Ingham, 2002), this genre is not just one type of music or one type of fan – it is a collection of different sub-genres and different types of fans. Genres are a method used by fans to categorise and describe forms of media (Gunn, 1999). Genres appear as a “result of the characterisations of [fans’] encounters with a series of texts, where there seem to be some key elements or themes that recur” (Gunn, 1999, p. 34). A variety of interpretations of media are always possible, however, and the process of categorisation varies. Even within one genre it is possible to have a range of definitions. “[M]usic is not just a symbolic register for what really happens elsewhere; it is itself a material, social practice, wherein subject positions are constructed and negotiated, social relations are enacted and transgressed, and ideologies are developed and interrogated” (Walser, 1993, p. 33). This is perhaps one reason for the creation of sub-genres, since disagreements as to what music and/or bands constitute Heavy Metal can give rise to new musical forms that, while sharing similar norms, differ to one degree or another due to dynamic generic distinctions.

Discussions of genre are not limited to the categorisation of musical forms. These debates are also about categorising people, as different genres also relate to a range of practices and identities. It is through the explanation and categorisation of music that those who “fit in” and those who do not are established. “Indeed, unless adjectival codes are enacted in life, or lived, we could say nothing of genre” (Gunn,

1999, p. 39). Differences of opinion can also create a type of forum, where identity is contested within the public space of musical knowledge of existing genres and related bands. This provides further opportunities for fans and community members to experience community through their interactions and discussions with others. It is also a way of “living” music and as such can be a way of setting oneself in opposition to another set of codes or aesthetic tastes (Gunn, 1999).

No one musical definition of Heavy Metal is likely to satisfy all variations. Table 1 outlines some of the different sub-genres of Heavy Metal. As words could never accurately or fully describe a musical form, I have included examples available for viewing via the Youtube Internet site.

Table 1: Heavy Metal Sub-genres (adapted from Shuker, 1998)

Sub-Genre	Characteristics	Youtube link example
Black Metal	Vocals usually vary from low growls to high squeals. Incorporates Gothic and Vampiric imagery (e.g. fangs and bats) and keyboards.	<i>Theatres de Vampire's</i> “Lilith Mater Inferorum” at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQjylw-vG8U
Death Metal	Grating vocals although can have melodic sections (further categorised as Melodic Death Metal)	<i>Deicide's</i> “Homage to Satan” at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJKMrI4AG8w
Goth Metal	Slower ballads with lyrical themes usually angst-ridden and concerning death/tragedy	<i>Type O Negative's</i> “Love you to Death” at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xD5No_JRrZw
Industrial Metal	Overt use of sampling, synthesizers and other forms of computer technology	<i>Ministry's</i> “N.W.O.” at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRLYHx2iUQM&feature=fvst
Nu-Metal	Often incorporates elements of Rap music such as DJs	<i>Limp Bizkit's</i> “Nookie” at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JTMVOzPPtiw&ob=av2e
Thrash Metal	Clean guitar riffs. Generally quite fast although bands often included a slower ballad in their albums.	<i>Metallica's</i> “Creeping Death” at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICKaVAbACek

This is not an exhaustive list of sub-genres; new genres are being created and defined as music and musicians develop and evolve. To list all the sub-genres of Heavy Metal identified so far would take several pages and would be largely

unnecessary in the context of this research; however, other selected examples that illustrate the diversity of this genre include Grindcore, Viking Metal, Power Metal, and Folk Metal.¹¹ Academic (e.g., Shuker, 1998) and populist (e.g., Ingham, 2002) understandings of these categories, as well as classification of songs within them, are not necessarily congruent with fan perceptions.

Further, the umbrella term Heavy Metal is not without its problems. Discussions surrounding the coining of the term Heavy Metal have included critics' comparisons to "a lot of heavy metal crashing" (Butler, as cited in Parsons & Carruthers, 2006), and, by contrast, its lyrical use in the 1967 rebellion-fuelled anthem "Born to be wild" with its phrase "heavy metal thunder" (Walser, 1993). Discussions of the term's origins have also included William S. Burrough's literary use of the term in 1962 to describe addictive drugs (Wikipedia, 2010b). From these examples, there is a common association between Heavy Metal and themes of anti-establishment or counter-culture. These associations are important for Metallers in constructions of their identity.

Central to public discussions and the construction of a Metaller identity is the perception of fans and non-fans that Heavy Metal music is oppositional to "mainstream society". While Heavy Metal music is considered less popular than other genres of music, Heavy Metal bands still enjoy some commercial success. However, despite millions of dollars being spent by fans on Heavy Metal bands that enjoy world tours and significant media coverage, critics and fans continue to regard Heavy Metal music and Metallers as cult or underground (Walser, 1993). Research concerning other forms of cult media has also emphasised distinctiveness from the mainstream. Within the movie genre, for example, the mainstream is viewed as an "imagined amalgam of corporate power, lower-middle class conformity and prudishness, academic elitism, and political conspiracy" (Jancovich et al., 2003, p. 2). This positioning of fans of such media as relative outsiders has been described in media research as being central to their identities (Jancovich et al., 2003). Through the construction of a disapproving mainstream, cult fans are able to create a distinction between themselves and the "norm", forming boundaries in order to

¹¹ For definitions and descriptions of these see Wikipedia (2010b).

distinguish those who belong and those who do not (*cf.* McMillan & Chavis, 1986). This distinction is necessary because when presenting themselves as oppositional and different, fans are able to confer value on both themselves and the media that play a large part in their everyday lives (Jancovich et al., 2003). In a similar way, Heavy Metal makes frequent use of its symbolic positioning against the mainstream - Metallers use their perceived marginalised status as a source of pride and solidarity (Weinstein, 2000).

As described in the previous section, while public debates surrounding this form of music often use words like uncultured to describe Metallers, this group is not necessarily marginalised in the same way as other groups, such as ethnic minorities (*cf.* Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). As an example from my own personal experience, while Metallers can be discriminated against based on physical appearance in relation to tattoos, aesthetic tastes in music alone will not usually be a basis for significant discrimination in the workforce. Such aesthetics can be viewed as distasteful by those who are not fans, but with millions of listeners worldwide Heavy Metal music is not as underground as it has often been described. International producers of this form of music still benefit from its commercial success. Heavy Metal shows are also extremely popular internationally: for example, the Wacken Open Air Festival in Germany sells in excess of 70,000 tickets annually (Wikipedia, 2010f).

In the last ten years, Heavy Metal has increased in popularity in New Zealand; during the period 2002-2007, the Auckland music store Real Groovy sold 600 Heavy Metal albums a month (Perrott, 2007). On occasion, lesser known Heavy Metal bands have had to cancel tour dates in New Zealand due to low ticket sales (e.g., *Fear Factory* and *DevilDriver* in 2006). However, concert attendance has also been relatively high in this country during the last decade. For example, a *Metallica* concert in Auckland (13 October, 2010) sold all 12000 tickets (www.ticketek.co.nz). Yet this form of music is still viewed by fans and some non-fans as underground and rebellious. Social commentators have elaborated on this aspect in their struggle to define the genre.

Music for outsiders I think. It's music that sort of defines itself against the norm rather than wanting to be part of the norm, even when it becomes mainstream. *Metallica* could be the biggest band

on the planet yet the fans still think of themselves as the outsiders and the freaks, the geeks, the whatever, the disenfranchised (Brannigan, as cited in Parsons & Carruthers, 2006).

Heavy Metal music is aesthetically marginalised as a form of culture that is lower than “higher” cultural pursuits such as those discussed in the previous section concerning classical music. Aesthetic marginalisation however, as Brannigan (as cited in Parsons & Carruthers, 2006) alludes to above, is to a certain extent enjoyed by Heavy Metal fans. They draw upon wider public debates regarding their taste in music as unsavoury, as well as its positioning as underground, and incorporate these debates into their identity - using such negativity as “a badge of honour” (Weinstein, 2000, p.117). As such, this positioning constitutes a performance of identity and community and a way of talking about music with others (Gunn, 1999).

Conceptualising identity and community

Identity and community membership are central to human existence (Silverstone, 1999) and have been the subject of social science research for some time (Hermans, 2001; James, 1890; Jenkins, 2004). A key tension that emerges in this area is the relationship between individuals and groups, the personal and the social (Jenkins, 2004). This section outlines key insights from existing research in this area that are of direct relevance to the present study. My particular focus is on the move away from the contemporary Western cultural construct of a self-contained, autonomous being who interacts with other such beings, and who has been described as “the lonely thinker” (Jovchelovitch, 2007) back to earlier and more fundamentally social or relational conceptualisations of the self. I argue for a relational approach to identity that focuses on processes of communing as discussed by Silverstone (1999) and others.

Prior to the 17th and 18th century, people in Europe commonly thought of the self as being fundamentally relational in nature and as a product of environmental factors and interactions with other people (Carrier, 1995). Similar views have remained central in other parts of the world such as China (Yang, 2006) and among indigenous peoples such as Maori (Hodgetts et al., 2010a). As is the case globally,

people in Europe were historically often viewed as being connected to, and inseparable from, other people, cultural objects, and places, making up networks of relationships and social interactions (Carrier, 1995). This perception of the self recognised that people experienced themselves as being socially situated, constructed, and developed from such relationships. Historically, a person's identity was viewed as being socially constructed through interactions with other people, and an individual's actions in the world were seen as variable and influenced by specific contexts (Gusfield, 2003). As will be discussed later in this section, supporters of this view acknowledge that people draw upon the places, objects, and people around them in the development of their identities (Jovchelovitch, 2007). This view places emphasis on social interactions and experiences as integral to the development of the self. Such interactions connect people to others, creating a network or web of relationships that constitute the self (Carrier, 1995), also referred to within Confucian philosophy as the cobweb self (Yang, 2006).

With the advent of the 17th century and the rise of capitalism, perceptions of the self began to change towards viewing people as autonomous and self-contained individuals (Mauss, 1985). According to this view, the self is located within the individual, rather than within social relationships (Turner, 1976). Supporters of this view, that is now dominant within social psychology, approach identity as a cognitive experience located inside the heads of individuals (Wang, 2007). This perspective can be associated with the Cartesian conceptualisation of the self that creates a dualism between mind and body and focuses on a "personality" that is restricted to the individual mind (Jovchelovitch, 2007). As a result of this, proponents of this perspective explain the behaviour of other people through discussions of individual motivations and choices that stem from personal drives and desires (Trilling, 1972). Viewing people in this way lead to the reduction of groups to being made up of collections of autonomous individuals, each with their own motivations and predispositions (*cf.* Carrier, 1995). This has lead to social research that attempts to predict peoples' behaviour via the identification and classification of these internal motivators, which include social drives such as the emotional and cognitive need to belong to social groupings (e.g., Uljas, 2001).

This conceptualisation of the autonomous being has been challenged. In the late 19th century, scholars began to reemphasize relational and interactional views of the self. This movement in Anglo-American psychology, which dominates the globe at present, can be traced to the work of William James (1890), with his particularly influential distinction in the self between the *I* and the *Me*. James (1890) described the *I* as the self-as-knower, which represents a sense of personal identity consisting of a sense of continuity of identity over time, a sense of individuality or being different from others, and a sense of agency through accepting or rejecting information gathered through experience. The *Me* is the self-as-known and consists of everything that the person can call their own such as their body, possessions, and other people with whom they interact. This conceptualisation recognised that identities are not simply located within minds, but are also external and relational (Gergen, 2006; Hermans, 2001). Central to this view is the recognition that the personal and the social are woven together in a dynamic relationship; the self is not solely reliant on others, nor is it completely contained within the individual (Hermans, 2001).

European social psychologists in the 1970s and 1980s, such as Henri Tajfel (1981), recognised the need for social psychology to include interactions with groups and wider social processes within research and theory. In the 21st century, the concepts of identity and the self have continued to be conceptualised in numerous ways. For example, some researchers conceptualize identity as including embodied displays such as dress and stylisation (Frith & Gleeson, 2004), some have recognised place-based identities (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000), and many have suggested that personal identities are fundamentally relational in nature (Jenkins, 2004). All of these various conceptualisations are useful when discussing identity and the self. What is needed is an integrated approach to identity that brings together these various components (Liu et al., 2010) and recognises both the individual and the social. This is necessary for encapsulating the ways in which individuals act with agency, making decisions as to whether they accept or reject opportunities to join other groups or accept various experiences into themselves (Hodgetts et al., 2010a).

One attempt to integrate aspects of the self is the work of Hermans and colleagues (1992) on the “dialogical self”. Their research extended the work of James (1890) to conceptualise a dialogical self that contains a number of dynamic *I* positions. These

positions represent a range of different identities that are presented, depending on contextual variables such as place and time. The presentations of various *I* positions are constantly involved in a dialogue with each other as new information comes to hand that can challenge these positions. This notion of the dialogical self means that there is more than one *I* position, and that these can contradict and challenge others within the same person (Hermans, 2001). This highlights how people can behave differently in different situations and interactions. Hermans (2001) also states that each of these *I* positions has associated *Me* positions consisting of different possessions and related people. His work recognised that while there is an element of stability over the course of one's life, there are also elements of change and development.

An implication of this approach is the introduction of pluralistic and interactional aspects to concepts of identity. The self is the centre of a complex network of relationships that are reflected in people's experiences and interactions both within and across social locales. This conceptualisation of the self may be understood via the metaphor of the cobweb that is based in traditional Confusion concepts (Yang, 2006). Here the cobweb of an individual human being is seen as woven within the webs of other people. Every person's actions affect other webs - which results in changes to the shape and nature of wider webs, and so on (Yang, 2006). Such changes occur through interactions with those people who are perceived to be different or with those who are thought to be sufficiently similar (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Jovchelovitch, 2007). This thesis invokes conceptualisations of identity that recognise it as a cumulative process defined and developed through social interactions with others (Charon, 1979; Kaufman, 2000; Mead, 1934).

Through such interactions, people develop and further draw upon public narratives in the construction of self (Hodgetts et al., 2010a). People interact with each other both individually and collectively, and in the process develop understandings of the world, which are further drawn upon in the definition and development of their identities (Jovchelovitch, 2007). Music is one method of developing and sharing narratives or ways of being, by providing opportunities for people to interact with one another (Williams, 2006). By that I am not limiting music as simply a way of conveying messages, as I have discussed other academics doing in the first section of this chapter. The focus in this research project is how people use music as "a template

which [is] used for the formation of individual and collective identities” (Cushman, 1995, p. 91), through participation (Couldry, 2004). A more intricate approach such as this would recognise that there is a dialectic relationship between music and identity. Music is more than just the expression of identity but is also actively used in the formation of identity. Further, through engaging with music and participating in shared practices, listeners are able to develop a sense of belonging to various music-based groups. Through participating in music-based practices with others, people feel connected to something larger than themselves, developing a shared identity with other like-minded people (Williams, 2006).

Conceptualising identity and community is a complex process which continues to be debated within the field of social psychology. Here, I argue for a relational view of the self, as it allows for agency while still recognising the environmental factors that can influence the development of identities, which are shared by members of groups and evolve through everyday interactions and traumatic life events (Hermans et al., 1992; James, 1890). Emphasis is placed throughout this thesis on the interactive nature of identity because doing so allows us to account for human creativity and agency. This orientation also allows me to bring into question some of the ideas prevalent in psychology today, like the notion that media such as Heavy Metal music has a direct and deterministic impact on naïve minds. Rather than dictating behaviour, external factors (e.g. media) are used by audiences to create cultural narratives that are drawn upon in everyday life in the construction of social identities and communities (Hodgetts et al., 2010a).

A focus on how people use Heavy Metal music, rather than arguing that it causes anti-social behaviour, challenges the negative stereotypes of Metallers. These stereotypes stem from the perception of this music as a “bad” influence, rather than as a tool for a positive social identity. Some examples of these are outlined in the first section of this chapter, and in public reactions to news of this research project. Metallers are commonly considered to be violent thugs, unworthy of academic study due to their aesthetic tastes. However, everyday life and media use is much more complex than the simple cause and effect relationships proposed in the past. While this cause and effect approach has dominated psychology as a discipline, there has also been academic research that has attempted to address and explain these complexities, with varying success. In particular, the concepts of sub-culture and

fandom have been applied to such groups. These approaches have attempted to challenge this cause and effect explanation in different ways. Briefly, sub-culture has explained groups such as Metallers as a reaction not to lyrical content, but to wider social issues and structures such as poverty and capitalism (Bennett, 1999). Fandom, on the other hand, has attempted to emphasise the everyday nature of social interactions. In this instance however, everyday interactions frequently centre on a shared hobby or interest (Hills, 2002; Lewis, 1992). These approaches are not without their difficulties, however, and in attempting to address deviance I propose that they actually reinforce it. As such, in this thesis I explain this group's interactions via the concept of community in order to more accurately reflect the everyday nature of their group membership.

Identities, subcultures, and fans: From interactions to shared social identities.

Media-based identities have been the subject of much scholarly debate. Researchers from a range of social science disciplines have investigated the role various media forms serve in the creation and development of social identities (e.g., Jenkins, 1992; Walser 1993). Music is a way of bringing people together in social groupings, providing opportunities for social interactions that can be used in the development of the self (*cf.* Cushman, 1995; Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Such groups have been conceptualised in a number of ways, including sub-cultures and fandom. While not without their difficulties, these conceptualisations are useful for the current research project as they provide a means to investigate the communal nature of media use, particularly in relation to the development of social identities. In this section I examine these two bodies of work in relation to Heavy Metal music and its fans. In identifying their limitations, I argue for the usefulness of community literature as a way of conceptualising Heavy Metal fans.

The largest body of work I have identified which discusses the use of media by groups of people and how this relates to shared identities has been in the area of sub-cultural research. An extensively theorised definition of sub-culture was developed in the 1960s by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) (Gelder, 1997). The CCCS emphasised style-based youth cultures,

such as Rockers and Skinheads. The deviant behaviour associated and attributed to such groups was conceptualised as a reaction of working-class youth to structural changes in post-war Britain. The formation of sub-cultures was seen as a means for working class youth to support each other during experiences of poverty and to gain a sense of unity and 'we-ness' (Bennett, 1999). In this way, sub-cultures were conceptualised as groups of working class youth whose cultural status was linked to their class subordination and shared identities (Gelder, 1997). Cohen (1972) framed sub-cultures as symbolic structures that corresponded to a shared parent structure or dominant class, in this case those with a higher socio-economic status. Such groups were seen as an attempt to resolve problems or conflicts inserted into the sub-culture by dominant groups. Hebdige (1975) followed a similar conceptual model in his research on Mods¹² - he discussed the appropriation of capitalist symbols and commodities, such as the scooter or stylish clothes, as symbolic victories against the establishment:

The basis of style is the appropriation and reorganization by the subject of elements in the objective world which would otherwise determine and constrict him. The mod's cry of triumph ... was for a romantic victory, a victory of the imagination; ultimately for an imagined victory (Hebdige, 1975, p. 94).

Hebdige (1975) viewed Mods as appropriating the symbolism of wealthier individuals in order to parody them. To him, this represented a form of moral victory where the working class resisted capitalist structures through mirroring its symbols.

While the CCCS provided a useful basis in the 1960s for further sub-cultural research, there are difficulties in applying its findings to more modern sub-cultural groupings such as Metallers. Modern sub-cultural groupings often rely on capitalism, as it provides them with the material objects that are required for performing identity (*cf.* Weinstein, 2000). A further possible implication of CCCS research is that groups such as Metallers are unwitting dupes who are rebelling against capitalism through ignorantly consuming the very products they were campaigning against. This approach paints a picture of these groups as consisting of superficial clothes-horses

¹² Mod is a sub-culture that originated in the 1950s in London that included elements of Pop music (particularly Soul, Rhythm and Blues and Ska), tailor-made suits, and Italian motor scooters (Wikipedia, 2010c).

who lack any sustained engagement with the social formations of which they are a part (Muggleton, 2000). As Miles (1995) acknowledged, such an approach “concentrate[d] on symbolic aspects of sub-cultural consumption at the expense of the actual meanings that young consumers have for the goods that they consume” (p. 35). In this way, CCCS approaches to sub-cultural research silence more modern day sub-cultural members (Kahn-Harris, 2007).

Further, sub-cultural theories that privilege notions of rebellion often lead to the analysing of Heavy Metal lyrics as an attempt to discover the source of this uprising. Psychiatric investigations into this form of music often cite a raft of reasons for people to listen to Heavy Metal, including such issues as dysfunctional families, lack of a sense of history, community fragmentation, and a sense of alienation from wider society. All of these were subsequently identified in such investigations as reasons for suburban or working class adolescents to seek self-validation in the mirrored themes of Heavy Metal lyrics (Reddick & Beresin, 2002). While these studies focus on the positive aspects of media appreciation, they overlook the meanings that the listeners themselves construct. They also overlook the social aspect of music appreciation, as people who listen to this form of music are often introduced to it through friends rather than coming to it as individuals seeking social support from a musical genre (Miles, 1995; Walser, 1993).

Theories of sub-culture may also reinforce existing cultural hierarchies. Thornton (1995) defines a sub-culture as having “come to designate social groups which are perceived to deviate from normative ideals of adult communities” (p. 2). She further states that the prefix “sub” signifies the perception of sub-culture as lower or secondary rank to mainstream culture. For example, labelling groups such as Metallars as a sub-culture implies this media-based form of culture is less-valued when compared to other musical forms. The term sub-culture positions Metallars as deviant and puts an emphasis on their variance from a larger, “normal” and dominant collective. While Metallars do enjoy such a positioning to a certain extent, this positioning can still be problematic, as for some, being a Metaller is but one identity among several integrated into their everyday lives (Kahn-Harris, 2007).

CCCS conceptualisations also read sub-cultural practices and symbols as merely resistance based and so everyday community practices were largely ignored (Kahn-Harris, 2007). Resistance based research that investigated the expression of a Metaller membership through symbolism or appearance views such practices as another form of text, a way of further communicating lyrical themes as expressions of social ills or rebellion (Reddick & Beresin, 2002). As a consequence, community practices that did not involve resistance, such as buying recorded music from a major record label, were largely overlooked by researchers (McRobbie & Thornton, 1995). This approach also ignored anti-mainstream resistance and expressions of authenticity that were merely used as a performance of identity, rather than seeking some form of social change. These performances are often aimed at increasing status within the community and maintaining the value of group membership (Thornton, 1995). Such criticism of the CCCS view of these groups is particularly relevant in the case of Heavy Metal, as its subordinate positioning is something that is enjoyed as a performance of identity. A Metaller's "us" versus "them" distinction differs from rebelling against capitalism and, instead, is manifested as a form of inter-group distinction in contrast to other sub-cultural grouping or aesthetic tastes (Halnon, 2006; Walser, 1993; Weinstein, 2000)

Traditional resistance-focused sub-cultural theories also tended to favour youth cultures. This focus on youth cultures in studies of popular music stems, in part, from the origins of this field of study in the CCCS. Academics within CCCS had a strong interest in youth collectivities that used music to construct their identities (Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Thus, much academic writing since the 1960s about sub-cultures labels members of these groups as youth, when they do in fact also include people from a range of ages (e.g., Hodkinson, 2002; Willis, 1990). This approach suggested that listeners of popular music will "grow out" of particular identities relating to music (e.g., Gross, 1990). This "growth" is considered likely to occur when the listener engages closely with the capitalist economy through fulltime employment and home-ownership (Davis, 2006).

Rather than "growing out" of mediated social identities, these identities are fluid and merge with others, or are de-emphasised as other identities such as manager or husband/wife take precedence. A focus on the changing use of media by its listeners can disclose the ways in which sub-cultural groups construct alternative ways of

being through communal practices (Couldry & Curran, 2003). This is why the term community (to be discussed in the following sub-section) is preferable to that of sub-culture - community implies a more holistic view of such groups and of the many uses and functions that music can serve. Community, when compared to the concept of sub-culture, also facilitates more nuanced research of such groups; for example, Heavy Metal is not purely a youth culture, since its listeners range from the very young to the very old, a spectrum reflected to some extent in the ages of my research participants (see *Participants* section in the Methods chapter of this study). While the meanings drawn from music may change, this is not symptomatic of Heavy Metal as a phase, after which people discontinue membership. It instead represents the dialogical nature of the self and a shift in emphasis and presentation of identity (cf. Hermans, 2001)

Arguably a more relevant conceptualisation of such groups is the concept of fandom. Conceptualisations of fandom contain a greater focus on aesthetic tastes in media forms, representing a shift away from notions of rebellion towards a broader consideration of everyday practices (cf. Jenkins, 1992). The everyday nature of fandom is acknowledged by media researchers (e.g., Hills, 2002; Lewis, 1992).

[A fan is] somebody who is obsessed with a particular star, celebrity, film, TV programme, band; somebody who can produce reams of information on their object of fandom, and can quote their favoured lines or lyrics, chapter and verse. Fans are often highly articulate. Fans interpret media texts in a variety of interesting and perhaps unexpected ways. And fans participate in communal activities – they are not ‘socially atomised’ or isolated viewers/readers (Hills, 2002, p. ix).

The notion of fandom is relevant in this instance as Metallers are fans of Heavy Metal music. The ability to discuss favourite bands and various aspects of genre are an important part of their identity (Kahn-Harris, 2007). Metallers use such discussions to reaffirm membership, identify with other Metallers, and as an expression of their enjoyment of this form of music (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Further, theories of fandom are not limited to discursive discussions or conversations but also recognise the material nature of social identities. As Lewis (1992, p. 1) states, fans are also the people who “wear the colours of their favourite team ... the ones who sit in line for hours for front row tickets to rock concerts. Fans are, in fact, the most

visible and identifiable of audiences". As will be discussed in the next section, being a Metaller also means owning relevant material objects such as CDs, T-shirts, and accessories. Metallers enjoy collecting these objects as a means of reaffirming identity and encouraging discussion with like-minded people (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Through this participation in fandom, Metallers construct collective and individual identities (*cf.* Lewis, 1992).

In a similar way to discussions of sub-culture, however, discussions of fandom may also result in the public's positioning of fans as inferior to or deviant from wider society. Academic publications such as Jenkins' (1992) *Textual Poachers* privilege the fans as creative users of media texts who are not weirdoes disconnected from "normal" society. However, in public deliberations regarding fans (e.g., Mitchell, 2009), they are often portrayed as obsessive nerds whose cultural pursuits are a waste of time. The implication of this is that being a fan is perceived as an escape from life, rather than as a part of identity and everyday experiences. While this aesthetic marginalisation is not a direct result of academic deliberations, notions of deviance still prevail in wider discussions regarding fans. Articles such as Mitchell's (2009) tend to focus solely on large scale fan-based events where dressing up is an accepted part of attendance, rather than on what it means to be a fan on a daily basis. Greater concern for psychological well being might be more reasonably afforded to a person who dresses up as Superman while sitting at home watching television or when working at the office. Analyses and reports of fandom are often more concerned with isolated one off events rather than accounting for multiple interests and commitments that are interwoven with the subject of a fan's devotion.

Both sub-cultural and fan-based conceptualisations of groups that draw upon media in the development of personal and social identities imply some form of marginalisation. Sub-cultural perspectives result in economic or class based marginalisation, whereas fandom results in aesthetic marginalisation. Research concerning groups of media fans, such as Metallers, needs to account for shared aesthetic tastes and associated practices without implying the same level of deviance that are often indicated through customary notions of sub-cultures or fandom. Metallers experience their identities and group membership as normal and everyday, and so concepts that are drawn upon to explain their experiences need to shift away from deviance towards more routine explanations. In other words, when

investigating groups such as Metallers, there are advantages to be gained through a focus on similarities rather than differences. With this in mind, I propose that groups such as Metallers be conceptualised as a community, which will be discussed in the following sub-section.

A shift to fluid, identity based communities.

In this sub-section I examine the concept of community and how this term applies to Metallers. The term community, while being more relevant than previous discussions of sub-cultures and fandom, is not without its own drawbacks. In particular, the use of the concept as a means to isolate groups in order to more easily measure and study them has resulted in a very narrow view of peoples' everyday experiences of such groups. The concept of communal boundaries is an example of this detached approach to community research. Briefly, boundaries are inter-group demarcations that are used to differentiate a group from others (*cf.* McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Instead of this notion of boundaries, I propose that the metaphor of thresholds is more appropriate. While this will be discussed in more depth in the fourth section of my first Analysis chapter, here I introduce it as a way to account for the fluid nature of community interactions across places.

The term community was originally developed to refer to rural centres where local residents were linked through shared beliefs or kinship within a geographical area (Bess et al., 2002). Later conceptualisations defined communities in relational terms (Colombo et al., 2001), with scholarship focusing on the quality of interpersonal interactions, particularly in relation to interest groups such as sports fans or hobby clubs (Obst et al., 2002). The term community is now used to describe a range of different groups. Common amongst most definitions of communities are elements relating to membership, symbolism, trust, feelings of reciprocal influence, and a sense of loyalty which is often expressed through art (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Communities may vary in size and power, particularly in relation to ethnicity, age, or gender (Sarason, 1974), and can also have borders and boundaries to distinguish "one of us" and "one of them" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). These boundaries are not necessarily limited to geography, but may be physical, linguistic, religious, ethnic, social, and cultural (Jovchelovitch, 2007). Such concepts can be applied to the

Heavy Metal community. My participants' experiences, examined in the Analysis chapters, reflect a sense of connection to a larger collective or community. Such connections are developed through symbolic and physical interactions with others. In other words, Metallers have an identity and sense of belonging that is developed and expressed through sharing media-based symbols and through engaging in shared activities (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007).

Communities are frequently defined and developed through physical participation (Wenger, 1998). Community members feel connected to other members through actively engaging in shared activities – which has been conceptualised in academic literature as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). That is why the study of media by social scientists is important, as media such as music provide a readily available resource for the development and maintenance of communities through collective engagement (Silverstone, 1999). Through attending and participating in events such as concerts, collectively constructed identities that are central to communities are communicated, expressed, and developed (Valentine, 1995). Thus, Metallers constitute a community of practice, developing a sense of belonging through collective experiences and interactions relating to a particular genre of music (*cf.* Wenger, 1998).

The term community is not without its difficulties, however. These tend to arise from academic discussions of what defines a community boundary. Boundaries are “collectively being built, separating, approximating, levelling, ranking, or in one word, organising social groups and categories in their mutual interrelationships” (Arantes, 1996, p. 82). Such notions have been discussed with reference to geographical communities (e.g. through fences or doorways), and have also been applied to interest-based communities through discussions of psychological boundaries (Sibley, 1995). The expression of collective differences in relation to personal or aesthetic tastes is a method for creating and enforcing psychological boundaries (*cf.* McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In other words, an individual or group may judge another individual or group for their taste in music, and in the process make them feel unwelcome (North & Hargreaves, 2007).

Such notions of boundaries have resulted in psychological research that has tended to conceptualise these groups as self-contained - a trend which leads communities to be viewed as stable objects “out there” to be investigated. For example, psychological researchers have made reference to “the gay community” without recognising that people within these groupings belong to multiple communities and express multiple identities (e.g., Tewksbury, 2002). When discussing music, this narrow view implies that a person is limited to one particular type of music, and that enjoying one type of music restricts a person’s ability to listen to others.

Communities such as Heavy Metal challenge this traditional concept of community, as the notion of boundaries does not fully reflect the fluid nature of communities across a variety of settings, nor how people move through these different groupings in their daily lives. Communities are fluid and changing, arising through interactions with both those who are the same and those who are different. Due to the dynamic practices or rituals in which community members participate in across places, communities are fluid and bridge geographical locations. Practices are also constantly changing as new “ways of doing things” are established, modified, or discarded (*cf.* Chaney, 2002). As the self has a range of differing interpretations and perceptions, these shifting definitions give communities their dynamic and fluid nature (Denzin, 1969). In other words, communities change and people change with them. Conceptualising community in this way views the term as a verb rather than a noun - it is constructed during interactions and interrelations (*cf.* Jovchelovitch, 2007).

Rigid notions of communities within places are further challenged with the advent of technology such as the Internet. People participate in community practices online, which have been discussed via the concept of virtual communities. Electronic based virtual communities are conceptualised as “social aggregations that emerge from the Net when people carry on ... public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace” (Rheingold, 1993, p.5). Internet fan clubs in particular have become an important tool in relation to social interaction and can provide useful communicative links between fans and artists in the construction of genre (*cf.* Gunn, 1999; *cf.* Theberge, 2005). Researchers have discussed the distinction between real (physical) and imagined (virtual) communities, using examples of geographical versus online communities. The geographical is

positioned as being somewhat dated and even extinct while the virtual is a new and unique cultural formation (Watson, 1997).

As is usually the case with emerging communications technologies, the Internet has been both heralded as revolutionising communications and communities, and vilified for taking the social out of social interaction (Robins, 1996). People who make frequent use of the Internet and other similar technologies for communication are often categorised as taking on completely different identities and acting out incredible fantasies (Robins, 1996). In contrast, fans of media such as music often appear to be more interested in declaring and expressing their own identities than trying to be someone else (Goodings et al., 2007). This is due to the personal and affective investment in the music and its role as an identity. The everyday use of the Internet, including interactions through forums and other online communications, can be used to not only express community with other fans but also as a means of validating an individual member's existence and passions (Theberge, 2005).

The Internet is used as a tool to keep in touch with other members of existing offline communities. Jones (2002) describes the Internet as a convenient way for people to easily and conveniently stay in touch with family and friends, with message posting and emails being the basis for social communications. McMillan and Morrison's (2006) study of college students' use of the Internet shows that the majority of participants used it as a place to solidify offline identities and community memberships. Thus, participants in that research viewed community as being purely an offline experience. While the Internet was used to help develop, manage, and grow communities, participants did not consider such interactions as constituting a community by themselves. The relative success of social networking sites often depends on their ability to evolve in ways that are based on the needs and practices of their users (*cf.* Rogers, 1983). This focus moves debate away from one of effects of such technologies on users to a focus on how media is created in everyday lives and related environments such as work and home (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008). The Internet becomes a way for community members to engage with others in order to develop and maintain identity.

With this in mind, it is “time the real world broke into the virtual” (Robins, 1996, p. 4). Online discussions and chat rooms are just some of the ways in which people can commune, interact, and engage in shared practices that provide the basis for cultivating social ties and a sense of belonging, mutual understanding, trust, and support (*cf.*, Snell & Hodgetts, 2007; Stone, 1991). Relatively new technological developments, such as the Internet, predominantly rely on the social actors who use them (Barkardjieva, 2003), and so must be situated within the broader social and political context of their existence (Robins, 1996). Previous research has shown that those people who make frequent use of the Internet for communication also have high levels of face-to-face interactions (Baym et al., 2004). In view of this, researchers should be conceptualising the virtual and the real as a double articulation of space (Silverstone, 1999). Here, media technologies are seen as providing virtual spaces that are folded into existing spaces of everyday life, such as a living room or bedroom. In the case of the Internet, users occupy the world not only physically through sitting at a computer but also symbolically through virtual interactions online.

The ability for people to belong to multiple communities and to transcend the online/offline ‘divide’, illustrates the need for a more appropriate term than boundaries. With this in mind, throughout this thesis I have used the term thresholds. Thresholds are still used to differentiate groups, but are negotiable through the performance and interaction of embodied identities (*cf.* Paechter, 1993). A threshold represents the fluid nature of demarcations - thresholds are permeable, dynamic, and negotiable. For example, people can transcend thresholds by altering their appearances and symbolic displays (Hallam & Street, 2000; James, 1890). This concept is discussed in more detail in the first Analysis chapter.

Various conceptualisations of identity and community highlight how the self is not limited to internal processes but is also external and relational (Gergen, 1991; Hermans, 2001). As the self is relational, people are connected, and they influence the identities of other people in everyday life (Yang, 2006). Further, the concept of the dialogical self developed by Hermans (2001) recognised the pluralistic nature of identity. The self consists of a number of different / positions that are emphasised or de-emphasised in peoples’ interactions depending on the situation and context. Such interactions represent the sharing of identity with others in order to experience

feelings of community. In the present study, this process of “communing” arises through people coming together to engage with music, which includes practices, material objects, and places. These aspects will be explored in the next section.

Performing identity and community: Practices, objects, bodies, and places

As a way of extending understandings of personal identities in a manner that takes into account the communal nature of human life, processes of identity are increasingly associated with the ways people behave and interact with others (Kroger, 1996; Yang, 2006). Within the discipline of social psychology and within the social sciences more broadly, there is a move towards situated and relational conceptualizations of identity (Hodgetts et al., 2010a). Such work includes notions of the practice-based (Chaney, 2002; Yang, 2006), material (Thornton, 2005), embodied (Williams & Bendelow, 1998), and place-based (Lewicka, 2008) selves explored in this section. Contemporary thinking regarding the character of identity is drawn upon to conceptualise how participants in my research project work together to construct their sense of self, belonging and community across places. With this in mind, the thesis focuses on the interactional and spatial nature of identity and community.

Music provides opportunities for people to develop identity and community by making available a range of options for social interactions (*cf.* Brooker, 2002; Marti, 2009; Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). As outlined in the previous section, Metallers are an example of a community of practice. Such communities provide a range of communal resources for social interactions that include routines, gestures or actions - referred to as practices (Wenger, 1998). A social identity is developed through these practices and interactions with others (*cf.* Merriam et al., 2003). It is through engaging in communal practices that “shared meanings are constructed, social relationships are negotiated, and processes of shared identification and participation are forged” (Hodgetts & Rua, 2010, p.156). With a focus on participation in communal activities, Metallers come together to engage with the music and with other fans (Halnon, 2006). Practice theory’s recognition of the importance of

participation in the forging of identities and community is emphasised in the centrality of the concept of practice in this present research project. Such practices are ways in which people share their identities with others (Heaney, 1995). The participatory nature of media-based communities, the ability to turn reception into participation, is a key part of what it means to be a community member (Hills, 2002; Jenkins, 2006). Listeners of music, for example, may create their own material objects through producing home-made fan magazines or developing musical skills that mirror those of their musical heroes (Hodkinson, 2002). Alternatively, turning reception into action may involve practices that do not require particular technical skills; these practices include being familiar with discourses surrounding bands or songs (*cf.* Alexander & Jacobs, 1998; Snell & Hodgetts, 2007).

When discussing such social practices surrounding media use, Couldry (2004) proposes that it is important to investigate what people are doing with media, what they are doing in relation to media, and how they categorise what they are doing. Consider, for example, a variety of people listening to the same song. One listener might be listening to the song because they enjoy the musical prowess of a guitarist. Another may be listening as the song reminds them of a particular time in their life when they would enjoy this form of music with others at parties. Thus media consumption can be understood as a component of wider social practices and relations rather than simply the reception of powerful messages. By adopting this focus, media such as music can be approached as a resource that provides opportunities for doing community (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Fans are not passive “zombies” (Silverstone, 2007).

Social relationships, interactions comprising community, and daily practices make up taken-for-granted experiences (Chaney, 2002). Routine practices are normative due to their repetitive nature, yet are significant in terms of identity construction and the maintenance of social life (Mohrmann, 1993). Often amongst these routine events there is a “search for different kinds of order and a struggle for power and control over ones immediate material and symbolic space and time” (Silverstone, 2007, p.112). Through this combination of the taken-for-granted and the active, the material and symbolic, the actual and the perceived, humanity is constructed in everyday life (Silverstone, 2007).

In order to express everyday group affiliations, members of fan-based communities frequently represent their membership through the use of symbolism (Locher, 1998). These symbols often come to represent these communities: for example, a skull may represent Heavy Metal (Snell et al., 2011). This has been analysed in the social sciences through the concept of metonym. The word metonym translates from Greek to mean “beyond (or after) the name” and indicates how one particular object or name is used to represent something with which it is closely associated, culturally and/or spatially (Brown, 2006). Metonym defines a situation where symbols carry resonances of experience and events that reflect identity and community (*cf.* Clarke et al., 1975). Symbolism is a common visual strategy for advertising community membership to others (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Symbols are often displayed on material objects, and in the process these objects can also come to represent identities and communal affiliations (*cf.* Cullum-Swan & Manning, 1994). Scholarly publications examining the use of material objects in these processes, for example *The Journal of Material Culture*, investigate the relationship between objects and associated social relationships. Researchers publishing in these journals explore the links between the development and expression of identity and the functions of material culture (e.g., Garner, 2004; Garvey, 2005). Examples of material objects that reflect identity include clothing and jewellery which become a means for communicating community membership (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Such commodities can come to represent community memberships in a similar way to symbols, metonymically representing them and making tangible links to related populations (*cf.* Snell et al., 2011). As Noble (2004) states, an “enormous and never-ending variety of relations and people are sedimented and mapped through objects” (p. 240).

People share and develop meanings for symbols and the objects that display them as they interact with each other (Warriner, 1970). These meanings require a set of cultural meaning systems in order for them to be decoded (Yang, 2006). For example, the clothes people choose to wear may have meanings known only to those with the cultural knowledge to decode their meaning. Thornton (1995) terms the use of objects to denote community membership as sub-cultural capital. The displays of objects also provide stylisation, where symbolic aspects are exaggerated during everyday life as conduits for culture (Chaney, 2002). Stylisation plays a key

part of the Heavy Metal community as symbolic displays are potentially taken everywhere the individual goes, either as forms of dress, embodied expressions such as tattoos and piercings, or usernames and logos on websites. In addition to advertising membership and belonging, symbols and objects may be understood as delineating those who do not belong or are “inferior”. Social and community psychologists define boundary marking between those who belong and those who do not as a form of border maintenance (Campbell, 1995; McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Social commentators have pointed to the ways in which commercial interests and businesses such as clothing manufacturers have exploited the need for identity expression to sell products (Frank & Weiland, 1997). Such commentators have discussed this as an example of exploitation that creates a tension between self expression and the influence of capitalist requirements for consumption. Rather than being a mutually exclusive choice in relation to positioning, participants’ expressions of identity are situated within wider societal structures of capitalism. This thesis recognises that while there is market influences on the community, Metallers are not cultural dupes who are taken advantage of by corporate interests. Instead, they are aware of such aspects of community membership and work within them, accepting and purchasing those items they recognise as representing the social identity they want to present while rejecting those that they do not. They can also alter the objects they purchase through decoration or otherwise modifying them, in order to further personalise commodities. This has been described as appropriation. To appropriate an object is to “make it your own” in order to further reflect individual and collective identities. The appropriation of various symbols and commodities is an important part of the production of social worlds and individual and collective identities (Thompson, 1995).

To become a member of a community, it is not enough to own an important object or piece of memorabilia or simply to display appropriate symbols. In the case of Heavy Metal, prospective members also need to be able to discuss band histories and other related subjects (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). The level of knowledge required is a matter of opinion amongst community members, viewpoints that evolve as new knowledge is shared (DeCerteau 1984; Gunn, 1999). In this way full community membership is not simply achieved through the accumulation of objects - it is achieved through a combination of appropriate symbolism and knowledge.

DeCerteau (1984) spoke of the everyday as concerning the “construction of individual sentences with an established vocabulary and syntax” (p.65). This concept may also be applied to the use of objects and symbols by communities - the consumption of media-related symbols and commodities may be used as a language (*cf.* Livingstone, 2002). In this instance, the objects and symbols become the vocabulary, with the associated relevant knowledge as the syntax. If this combination is not achieved, objects and commodities that a person may possess will potentially be viewed by others as mere attention or status seeking rather than as “elements of being” (Noble, 2004, p. 251). The meaning of such symbols is not just the work of one person, but is lived through the experiences of all those who are members of the community (*cf.* Lawrence et al., 2004). Through interaction the norms and practices that define the “correct” way of listening to music are established (Gunn, 1999). As people interact through their bodies, the correct way to listen to music is often established by participating in communal practices and the display of symbols on the body (Gregory et al., 2009; Merriam et al., 2003).

The body plays an important role in the performance of identity and community (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). In the natural sciences, research concerning the body conceptualises it as a container for identity (usually discussed in terms such as cognition or emotion) that can then be extended into the world through action (Thompson & Stapleton, 2009). This presents a Cartesian view of everyday life, as it makes a distinction between internal states and external experiences. Adherence to a natural sciences view of the body creates a dichotomy of internal representations (often referred to as personality) and external stimuli (the world “out there”) (Jovchelovitch, 2007). Such conceptualisations often view the skin as a boundary between the internal and external realms. That perspective can, however, lead to researchers omitting consideration of the external, social world in which knowledge is developed (Jovchelovitch, 2007). For example, identity is developed not only through internal cognition but physical interactions with other bodies as well. These interactions also have an impact on the development of identity and its expression through the body (Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Paechter, 2003)

Within the social sciences, the body has also been viewed as a space for social engagement (Gregory et al., 2009). Spatial views of the body position it as yet another place for the enactment of identity and community (Williams & Bendelow, 1998). The body is shaped and decorated in order to reflect not only internal states and feelings, but also as a bodily representation of the external world (Back, 2004). This reciprocal relationship between identity and the body has been referred to as embodiment (e.g., Cromby, 2005). Durkheim (1995 [1912]) explained the process of embodiment as including the display of personal and social identities through markings, decoration, and dress, so that individuals could recognise other community members. Hanson (2007) describes the use of the body in this way as “a reference point ... through which, and on which, experiences may be translated and interpreted” (p. 65). Visual representations on the body, for example through tattoos, also link people to their life worlds, including connections to other people, objects, places, and events (Te Awekotuku et al., 2007). In other words, the body is a space where the internal and external worlds are amalgamated and represented (Back, 2004). This perspective supports the assertion that identities are not located purely within heads, but are also evident in display and social interactions; bodies are shaped and altered to reflect not only inner cognition but also interactions with external environments (Jovchelovitch, 2007; Snell et al., 2011).

Bodies used in this way become a form of capital that is used in interactions with others (Hills, 2002). Reflecting the social aspect of the body, social science research also recognises that embodiment is not limited to the way people decorate themselves but also involves how they use these stylisations in social interactions (Chaney, 2002). Diprose (2005) views the body as “not usually a sign of itself; it only means something through the expression and sharing of meaning in community with other bodies” (p. 384). Embodied identities are also manifested through participation in communal practices (*cf.* Cromby, 2005; *cf.* Yang, 2006). Earlier discussions in this section regarding practice theory outlined the importance of engaging in shared rituals in building communal bonds (Wenger, 1998). These bonds and collectivities can be embodied through physical participation as well. The participation can occur through the socially facilitating nature of embodied representations such as tattoos, which can become focal points for communal interaction (Snell et al., 2011). Through these interactions, the meanings people have for their bodies are flexible and develop through interactions with others (Te Awekotuku et al., 2007). In this way, the

body is not only a biological entity used in displaying identity and community. It is also a social practice (Pitts, 2003; Snell et al., 2011; Te Awekotuku et al., 2007)

The combination of spatial and social dimensions of the body has been referred to in social psychology literature as the bodyscape (Snell et al., 2011). Within art history and cultural studies, the term bodyscape has been used to describe portrait paintings. Paintings of people, particularly those who are well known, may represent not only a particular person but may, in addition, constitute signs or symbols representing affiliations to particular places, times, events, and groups (Mirzoeff, 1995). In relation to the body, the bodyscape is not only physical but also social, personal, and communal. It is an expression of individual interests, tastes, and affiliations, as well as being the expression of individual and collective practices, values and ways of being. The bodyscape is a space that mediates between the inner world of a person, their participation in community events, and the social negotiation of their identity as a member of a particular group. As a repository for social life, the bodyscape is held within a broader life world and a communal field, and has a metonymic relationship with other places and bodies (Snell et al., 2011).

From this combination of practice, objects, and the body, Metallers construct their identities and participate in communal life in their daily routine. These performances of Metaller life are the result of enacting various stylisations, through behaviour and aesthetics that are commonly associated with this particular community in particular contexts (*cf.* Hodgetts & Rua, 2010; *cf.* Paechter, 2003). Often these enactments occur as part of our taken-for-granted experience of everyday life.

We do not just get up in the morning and decide that today we will be particular kinds of men and women; we slip into our roles, so imperceptibly that most of the time we do not even notice. It is only when we find ourselves performing ... as we subtly change our behaviour to fit in better with the situation in which we find ourselves (Paechter, 2003, p. 69).

In the quotation, Paechter (2003) indicates the seamless nature of everyday life. Routine practices and stylisations are not necessarily carefully planned. Identity performances are ingrained, and are part of everyday life, and so Metallers and other groups often find it difficult to articulate such processes (Chaney, 2002).

Everyday life is experienced across a range of places. Place and a sense of belonging are key concepts in environmental psychology, an area of scholarship that acknowledges the meaning people give to the locations they inhabit (Lewicka, 2008; Low & Altman, 1992). No matter how mobile people are as a society, some form of attachment to place is present in everyday lives (Cuba & Hummon, 1993). Relational communities also have connections to places, as shown through ongoing communing in club rooms. Such place identities express the affinities people develop for particular places (Lewicka, 2008). Proshansky (1978) has defined place identity as “those dimensions of self that define the individual’s personal identity in relation to the physical environment” (p. 147). Place-identity predominantly focuses on the characteristics of a person, not the place, through components such as peoples’ emotional connection or feeling for a place (Lewicka, 2008; Low & Altman, 1992). Emotions and thoughts are developed by physical interactions in, or with, a place, and so there is a need to recognise and focus on the physicality of such concepts. Community sites can become physical and meaningful manifestations of the relationships and shared practices that occur within their physical (Hodkinson, 2002) and/or virtual thresholds (Barkardjieva, 2003).

Place performs a key role in mediated communities as people come together in a place to engage with shared objects. Such places are textured through the practices, material objects, and bodies that inhabit them (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000; Giorgio et al., 2007; Leyshon et al., 1995). Due to its pervasiveness in everyday life, media requires attention as a factor in the construction and development of social meanings regarding place (*cf.* Silverstone, 2007). Music, for example, is a form of media that is ever-present and provides a soundscape for our lives (Smith, 1994). Thus, music performed at a concert not only changes the feeling or sense of a place, like wallpaper (*cf.* Wallis & Malm, 1984), but can be “used to actively re-create and reconfigure the spaces of experience” (Bull, 2000, p. 283). In other words, music and related practices give places their meaning.

Communal experiences of music such as concerts may, for example, bring people together in order to experience feelings of belonging through the social construction of place (DeChaine, 2002; Halnon, 2006). Concerts adhere to Bakhtin’s ([1936] 1984) notion of the spectacle, events “in which people live”, where “everyone participates because its very idea embraces all people” (p. 7). The concept of

spectacle suggests that places are textured and/or created through activities, becoming story depositories (Giorgio et al., 2007). Online sites can also develop into story depositories, as interactional social spaces, offline experiences, and objects can be pictured and discussed online (*cf.* Dixon & Durrheim 2000; *cf.* Goodings et al., 2007). In these ways, mediated communities represent something more than an emotional or cognitive connection, as has been suggested in existing discussions of place-identity (e.g., Lewicka, 2008). Places are not merely fixed backgrounds or simply containers for social action through which people feel connected to their environments (*cf.* Stokols, 1990). Instead places are often constructed and developed through performances and practices relating to identity (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000) and so there is a reciprocal relationship between places and people as each influence the other (Leyshon et al., 1995).

People inhabit many spaces during the course of the day, as they move through a variety of different communities and interact with a variety of different people (*cf.* Hodgetts et al., 2010b). Places such as Internet websites or club rooms can be linked through a series of complex social interactions (Stahl, 2003). In their article concerning a homeless man's experiences of place, Hodgetts and colleagues (2010b) discuss how their participant (referred to as Brett) constructed an identity as a "mobile hermit" through his encounters with various people, places, and things as he walked through the city. Brett's life was described as being "conducted in the midst of the city and across a range of different settings" (p. 300). In this way, Hodgetts and colleagues (2010b) evoke notions of mobility across places as Brett experienced and positioned his sense of self differently in relation to a variety of environments. His perceptions and encounters concerning a public toilet synonymous with drug use and needles, for instance, were experienced differently to more "normal" and clean environments such as a public library that he visited to read books. Brett's materially and spatially located experiences, in combination with his everyday practices, allowed him to construct a sense of self consisting of multiple positions.

One method used by Brett to connect places was by listening to an MP3 player, and using the music to weave these places together (Hodgetts et al., 2010b). In contemporary society, the everyday use and mobilisation of music may be experienced by means of portable players. Mobile music makes the home

environment portable (Bull, 2000), enabling the listener to create a bridge between private and public spaces, between the home and work, between friends and strangers (*cf.* Thibaud, 2003). Hodgetts and colleagues (2010b) argue that the use of portable players is a way of creating a “sense of distance, security, and privacy. It is access to this familiar space and the routine of listening that provides ... a sense of home on the move” (p. 297). In allowing for mobility, music is a way of creating a place within a place; portable players and the music listened to can weave spaces together - they represent a double articulation of space, where they and their user occupy a physical world, but also enable entry into a symbolic world that is co-constructed by producers and listeners of the music (*cf.* Silverstone, 1994; Thibaud, 2003). This co-construction of a symbolic world takes place between the producers of music who have provided some form of meaning for the music and lyrics of a song, and the fans and listeners who construct their own meanings through their personal experiences and memories (*cf.* Walser, 1993). When combined with the idea of mobility, sound not only creates a place within a place but can tie together physical places through “threads” which the listener traverses (Hodgetts et al., 2010b). The listener performs identity via a number of different practices, including walking about with a MP3 player, and in the process creates a familiar symbolic space through listening to music (DeLeuze & Guattari, 1987; Hodgetts et al., 2010b). This symbolic space is carried with the listener while traversing a number of different physical locations. Conceptualised in this way, community sites may be created and linked via the practices that are performed across them (*cf.* Durrheim & Dixon, 2005).

Thesis structure

This study investigates identity and community in the everyday lives of Metallers who are participants in this research. I document how presentations of self and identity often occur through the use of particular material objects and places and participation in shared practices. Self expressions can be manifested in ways that society finds unsavoury, resulting in the establishment of thresholds that are negotiated and transgressed as membership moves between and across multiple communities. These experiences occur both offline, in face-to-face interactions, and online, through social networking sites. In this research, I adopt a multidisciplinary

approach, drawing on a variety of social science disciplines in order to provide insights into this Metaller community of practice.

The thesis comprises five chapters. The next after this Introduction, Chapter Two, outlines the research methodology and is divided into five sections. *Symbolic interactionism and an ethnographically inspired project* outlines my approach to this research. With its emphasis on interaction and the role of place, practice, and material objects, I adopt a symbolic interactionist theoretical stance with an ethnographic methodology. *Participant recruitment, research procedure, and social networking sites* describes the specific research techniques that have been chosen to collect empirical material. *Participants* provides brief descriptions of the thirteen people who participated in this research. *The researcher* presents an account of my own positioning and perspectives relating to this research. The final section in the chapter, *Analysis*, discusses how empirical materials have been analysed, drawing upon methodological literatures on ethnography, material culture, and everyday life. The first Analysis chapter, Chapter Three, is titled *Identity, embodiment, and the negotiation of community*. Here I investigate the use of music in the formation of individual and collective identities. I also examine the expression of these processes through material objects and the body. *Adapting a social identity*, the first of four sections, conceptualises music as an external resource that is used for personal and collective identities. It describes how the sharing of this identity results in the formation and development of community. In the section *Material objects and stylisation*, I discuss how material objects are a way for Metallers to take their identities with them in their everyday interactions. Identities are mobile and so combinations of objects, such as clothing, are a means of expressing them. Bodies can also become sites for identity. The role of the body in the expression of identity and as a way of embodying social identities is discussed in another section, *Embodiment through tattoos*. In it, I use the example of tattooing to show how expressions of identity on the body bring together people, identities, places, and events. In *Valuing bodies and distinctions*, I examine how Metallers distinguish themselves from other groups. They do this in order to feel that their membership to this group is worthwhile. As I briefly discussed in the Introduction chapter, community psychology research has previously used the concept of boundaries to explain this process. However, because of the pluralistic nature of community membership, these demarcations can be negotiated and transcended. In this last section of

Chapter Three, I also investigate how these boundaries, reconceptualised in this thesis as thresholds, can be transcended by the changing or re-positioning of identity based displays such as visual appearance.

The second Analysis chapter, Chapter Four, is entitled *Identity and community across offline and online spaces* and examines the role of place as people commune across a variety of sites in everyday life. I utilise a structure of a diminishing scale, ranging from a large imagined community of the concert, to the private space of the home, to the public and private space of social networking sites. The chapter is divided into five sections. *Concerts as places for intense experiences of Metaller identity and community* investigates the role of concerts as communal experiences of media that draws people together. This represents a site where intensive experiences of community occur through participation in practices such as moshing (a form of dancing to Heavy Metal music). *Shared practices in more local settings: The bar and the home* examines how participation and the related feeling of belonging to an imaginary community may be taken to more localised settings. Metallers re-enact and remember concert experiences through everyday experiences. I then turn to the role of social networking sites. In the section *Taking identity online*, I investigate the use of social networking sites as another location for the performance of identity and community. The final section, *Spanning online and offline in everyday life* investigates how these online sites are woven into offline everyday life.

The final chapter, *Conclusions*, presents the wider social implications of this thesis and revisits significant findings in relation to my three key aims. To recap, these are: (1) to explore the ways in which social identities are negotiated and expressed in the day-to-day lives of thirteen Heavy Metal fans; (2) to document the ways in which social ties are negotiated and maintained across both online and offline sites for community; and (3), to provide a comprehensive understanding of community life in contemporary New Zealand society by analysing the experiences and practices of Heavy Metal fans. Attention is also given to the contribution this study makes to the broader discipline of psychology. In particular, I discuss the value of using symbolic interactionism as a way of investigating identity and community. These processes are intertwined and develop through interactions with people and objects across places. People draw upon community memberships and use performances of identity in localised interactions in everyday life. Identity and community are performed through engaging in practices with others in everyday life.

CHAPTER TWO: METHOD

There are ongoing tensions in psychology between scholars who subscribe to an approach to research modelled on the physical sciences and those subscribing to a more interpretative tradition modelled on the humanities. The former emphasises the need for researchers to be detached observers of social life. The latter emphasises participation and subjective engagements with human phenomena. I do not intend to rehearse these well trodden arguments here (for a more complete discussion of these issues see Hodgetts et al., 2010a). Rather, I wish to position myself in the latter camp. This position is informed by the work of Gergen (1973) and other writers (Jovchelovitch, 2007) who argue for the importance of culture and history to social psychology. This chapter explores the auto-ethnographic approach employed in my research, which combines insights from discursive and material culture orientated traditions (*cf.*, San Juan Jr, 1996). I draw upon the interpretative tradition to focus on processes of identity and community that encompass interactions between people and with media, places and material objects.

In this chapter I argue for the use of a qualitative, ethnographic approach to collecting data which is then analysed via an abductive process. The flexible and immersive method that I have adopted allows for a more contextual approach to research. A symbolic interactionist stance, combined with an auto-ethnographic methodology, provided the means of collecting empirical data and the framework for analysis for the current research project. I use this framework to examine my research participants' life worlds and how they develop their identities and communities through interacting with other people, places, and objects. I also provide information about data gathering procedures for each research element including interviews, photographs, web-audits, and direct observation.

My research method is presented in five sections. The section entitled *Symbolic interactionism and an ethnographically inspired project* states my theoretical approach and how this informs my research methodology. *Participant recruitment, research procedure, and social networking sites* outlines how this theoretical stance

was developed into a procedure for gathering empirical materials for this research. The section titled *Participants* provides brief biographies of each of my participants. *The researcher* explores my positioning as a researcher, including my membership to the community that is the focus of this study. The final section, *Analysis* gives a detailed account of how the various types of research materials were systematically analysed and how this analysis is to be presented later in this study.

Symbolic interactionism and an ethnographically inspired project

This section outlines the theoretical and methodological approach adopted for my research. I provide a brief overview of my understanding of symbolic interactionism, highlighting my focus on people and the ways in which they are connected to other people, places, and things. This stance informs my ethnographic methodology, a model that acknowledges the need for context and immersion in everyday community life in order to fully explore relationships between people, places and things (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2008). I am a member of the community with which I am conducting research both online and offline in each case. The research therefore embraces auto-ethnography, virtual ethnography, and multi-site ethnography.

My core focus is the expression of identity in everyday life. Metallers engage and interact with Heavy Metal music via a number of means including places, objects, and other people. Their social participation with others is a crucial aspect of their community (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). In view of this, I adopted symbolic interactionism as a theoretical orientation for understanding how a social identity can provide the basis for the construction of a community. Symbolic interactionism emphasises the idea that “behaviour is a response to specific contexts as the actor interprets these contexts” (Gusfield, 2003, p. 123). This approach brings together interactions that people have with others, as well as places and objects, and puts particular emphasis on how people interpret these interactions in the construction of meaning (Blumer, 1969).

Symbolic interactionism was derived from the work of such American pragmatists as John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, and Charles Cooley. John Dewey (1922) was an American psychologist and educational reformer. He recognised the relationship between an individual and their environment, describing human behaviour as relying upon a combination of internal senses as well as the external physical world. Although Dewey (1922) recognised that the environment had an influence on how people interacted and constructed judgements of others, he still viewed people as having agency and choice.

While being often identified by others as a philosopher of education, Dewey influenced a great number of sociologists and psychologists, such as George Herbert Mead. Mead was an American philosopher, sociologist, and social psychologist. He viewed the concept of mind as a special patterning of behaviour that grew out of social interaction. Mead was particularly concerned with how minds, or identities, are formed through interactions with others that involve objects and symbols (Scheffler, 1974). According to Mead (1934), it is through displaying and manipulating symbols and objects that the meanings for them are co-constructed with other people. Mead (1934) also recognised that people develop social relations with the material objects that are a part of their environments. For him, this social interaction was the primary factor in discussions of the self. Much like Dewey (1922), Mead (1934) also credited people with a sense of agency in relation to their environment, a view absent from traditional behaviourist views (e.g., Skinner, 1974).

In 1891, at the University of Michigan, Mead met Charles Cooley. Cooley (1964) was another American sociologist and social psychologist (these disciplinary labels were used interchangeably at the time) with a particular interest in the social aspect of identity. He referred to the *I* identified by James (1890) as being developed through interactions with other people, so that the *I* is not limited to a physical entity. From this insight Cooley (1964) developed the concept of the social self (more commonly referred to as the looking glass self). This view of self was discussed as “any idea, or system of ideas, drawn from communicative life, that the mind cherishes as its own” (Cooley, 1964, p. 179). In Cooley’s (1964) view identity incorporates aspects of how other people view us and how we feel about these judgements. Thus, the social self is strongly related to how people feel others see them – acknowledging communication between people.

Briefly, Dewey (1922) noted the importance of the environment and recognised how, as key elements of the social context in which we live, other people can become part of our identities. Mead (1934) was especially concerned with the social construction of the self and the function of interactions people have with symbols and objects. Cooley (1964) was particularly interested in the influence of interactions with other people and the contribution this made to peoples' sense of self. These views of self and the world, particularly Mead's (1934) contribution, were eventually developed further by Herbert Blumer. Blumer (1969) described symbolic interactionism as consisting of three premises: (1) people act towards objects based on ascribed meanings they have of those things; (2) these meanings that people have for objects are derived from, or are a result of, social interactions with other people; and (3), people engage in an interpretative process in order to construct these meanings of other people and objects. Snow (2001) broadened these elements with a discussion of the way in which people actively develop meanings and understandings of the world through interaction with events, objects, people, and groups in a manner that reflects the seminal ideas of William James (1890) relating to identity.

The core ideas from symbolic interactionism are particularly relevant to my thesis because Metallers create meanings for memorabilia and music through interactions with these products of popular culture and with other fans. Metallers engage with Heavy Metal music in their everyday lives. Metallers are also engaged in public deliberations in relation to their identities. The underground nature of identities is important to their sense of self and, as they define themselves in opposition to others, an example of the looking glass self. In sum, symbolic interactionism provided a basis for me to demonstrate the interconnectedness of these various relational processes, the use of material objects, and the importance of places for identity and community.

My use of a symbolic interactionist framework reflected a desire to broaden out discursive research that focuses on language. Although language provides an important tool for exploring human interactions (Sznycer, 2010), researchers also need to explore the use of material objects and places that are key features of identity construction (Hodgetts et al., 2010b). While I recognise that language is a part of the construction and development of the self, in this research I wanted to go further and incorporate notions of embodiment, materiality, and place. To do this, I

decided to utilise an ethnographic methodology. Ethnography is not one method, but incorporates a range of qualitative methods that are drawn together to generate an understanding of “the cultural and symbolic aspects of people’s actions and the contexts in which those actions occur” (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2008, p.16). Such methods can include interviews, visual methods (such as photography), and direct observation (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2008).

My choice of an ethnographic approach was informed by recent calls in psychology for context sensitive research that includes a focus on situations, places and material objects that are important to research participants (Foster-Fishman et al., 2005; Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2008). A key assumption of ethnographic work is that by interacting in close and continuing proximity with the community that is under investigation, ethnographers can gain a better understanding of the practices and beliefs of that community. This is particularly the case in respect to ordinary and taken-for-granted aspects of everyday life (Hammersley, 1992). An ethnographic orientation allowed me, through my own close proximity to community events and sites, to observe practices and their fluid development across places (*cf.* Lawrence et al., 2004). Thus, ethnography “involves an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events, and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context” (Tedlock, 2000, p.455). This ethnographic approach allowed me to engage in-depth with participants over time, to witness and contextualise changes and developments in their lives, and to conduct research *with* rather than *on* them (Hodgetts et al., 2010a). I used my participants’ rich descriptions of their everyday lives in relation to Heavy Metal music to consider the broader societal significance of such experiences.

Ethnographic approaches not only draw upon a range of methods, but can also take various forms (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2008). These can include auto-ethnographies (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), virtual ethnographies (Howard, 2002), and multi-site ethnographies (Hannerz, 2003). This research project draws upon all three of these variations. Below, I explain each of these methodologies and why I chose to draw upon them.

Ethnographic engagements with participants can include becoming a full participant in a given community, providing a level of intimacy that enables the researcher to gain insight into community life and what it is like to be a community member (Tewksbury, 2002). In anthropology, conducting a study on a community in which one is a member is referred to as native anthropology or auto-ethnography (Hayano, 1979). Such an approach is described as a way for researchers to “explore the creation of identity within particular sub-cultures and texts that contest the way the author’s community is characterized from outside” (Couser, 2005, p. 128). It is within this anthropological tradition of auto-ethnography that this research project is situated.

With its emphasis on social interactions in context, ethnography also recognises the role of place within participant interactions (*cf.* Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2008). People interact in a range of spaces both face-to-face and at a distance through mass and social media. Various media forms provide a particularly relevant and easily accessible symbolic context through which people create and develop their identities (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2007). For example, online interactions through social networking sites can be viewed as another space of interaction where participants negotiate meanings of identity and community (*cf.* Goodings et al., 2007). Addressing my research objectives required a methodology that would enable me to investigate the role of media in the development of associated relationships and identities, particularly in regard to places and daily practices. With this in mind, my research was also informed by virtual ethnography, an approach which explores everyday online interactions. For Howard (2002), researchers conduct virtual ethnography by selecting important nodes of a social network, in this case Myspace or Bebo (these sites will be described in the next section),¹³ to gain entrance into communities of practice and to establish trust with key community members.

¹³ Towards the end of this research, a number of developments occurred in the business of social networking sites. As a result, Myspace is currently struggling financially (“Myspace slashes global staff”, 2011) and the site Bebo is obsolete (Lynch, 2010). Meanwhile, newer sites such as Facebook have largely replaced them and become increasingly popular. While such sites differ in some minor areas, the features and results obtained and discussed in this research are equally applicable to these new forms of social networking sites.

Common to ethnographic studies is the “big net” approach to participant recruitment, which begins by:

mixing with lots of people then beginning to narrow your focus down to specific situations and individuals. Informality, acting on hunches, and using your intuition are all common features of ethnographic research, though more formal and structured designs are also used (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2008, p. 25).

The “big net” approach is particularly useful in virtual ethnography since it facilitates access to the large number of (potential) participants able to be sourced via the Internet. I began the process of collecting material for this study by becoming involved in online social networking sites (discussed in *The researcher* section), interacting with as many people as possible. Significant informants were identified because of their ability to discuss issues vital to the research, as well as their own social connections. These informants then became participants themselves or helped identify other participants. Initial interactions were continued offline so as to investigate further the possibility of potential participants taking part in the research. Offline discussions and interactions also provided a context for what was discussed online.

With this emphasis on context and environment, ethnographers emphasize the importance of the places in which people interact to understanding the groups with whom one is conducting research. People interact across a range of locations. Reflecting this, I drew upon insights from multi-site ethnography to investigate processes of identity across both online and offline sites. Multi-site ethnography, as it is referred to in anthropology, refers to research projects that “draw on some problem, some formulation of a topic, which is significantly translocal, not to be confined within some single place” (Hannerz, 2003, p. 206). This approach also recognises that connections between sites and the relationships experienced across them are as important as the interactions within them (Hannerz, 2003). With my focus on the construction of identities and social ties across places, I needed to examine how various locations were drawn together by my participants in the experience of their everyday lives. Drawing upon this approach meant socialising with participants across a range of locales, which will be discussed in the second section of this chapter. My membership to this community allowed me to traverse

these various Metaller and non-Metaller spaces with my participants, as performing this identity across spaces was a process that was familiar to me in my everyday life.

Participant recruitment, research procedure, and social networking sites

Informed by direct observation and participation, ethnography embraces multiple methods of data collection (Hammersley, 1992). For this research project, I utilised direct observation, web page audits, interviews, and photographic projects. Following ethics approval from the University of Waikato's Psychology Research and Ethics Committee in February 2007, thirteen participants contributed to this research. Twelve participants were recruited through their social networking sites, and another contacted me via email after viewing the *20/20* television programme. Following their recruitment, face-to-face interviews were arranged with each individual participant. A week prior to the interview, each participant was emailed an information sheet setting out the six general themes that the interview would cover (Appendix A). They were also sent a formal letter that outlined in more detail what to expect during the course of the research (Appendix B). Further, prior to the interview starting, each participant also signed a consent form (Appendix C).

This initial interview explored issues around Heavy Metal music, identity, and community. Participants also discussed their web sites with me, and brought to the interview objects that they felt were symbolic of their engagement with Heavy Metal. These discussions about their possessions provided the means to identify social practices by which Metallers participate in a Heavy Metal community. I also "hung out" with participants in social situations and attended local events with them. In this way, I was following the tradition of social observation in psychology as a basis for documenting social relations (Luders, 2004).

Social networking technology is a term which describes a range of methods used for Internet-based communication. Users of these technologies are able to log on through the main "portal" or "home-page" of the site which then links them to a personal web-page. Two of the most common social networking sites at the time of

my fieldwork were Myspace and Bebo¹⁴ (Goodings et al., 2007). Introductory text on Myspace states it is “an online community that lets you meet your friends' friends ... [you can] create a private community on MySpace and ... [you] can share photos, journals and interests with your growing network of mutual friends!” (Myspace, 2010, para. 1). Bebo has a similar description, stating that it is “a social media network where friends share their lives and explore great entertainment” (Bebo, 2010, para. 1). These sites comprise an international network of websites where individuals construct an online profile containing such biographical information as age, gender, interests, relationship status, and friends. Users of social networking sites often provide a great deal of self-representation, employing a mix of images, stories, music, and video clips to express their identity (Goodings et al., 2007). Social networking sites are not limited to individuals – profile pages can be found for community organisations, corporate entities, event organisers, protest networks, and bands. Indeed, social networking sites are a useful tool for bands as they provide opportunities to advertise concerts, promote album releases, deliver music on-line, and generally promote themselves.

The “networks of mutual friends” promised by social networking sites develop as people make links between pages. Each personal page includes a list of friends, who have access to each others' pages. Thus, if I visit the web-page of an existing friend I will see a list of people who are friends of my friend. I can then access their web-pages through their presence on the page of my friend. Due to the provisions of social networking sites it is possible to have people identify themselves as your friend even though you may never have met them previously. For example, my partner is listed as a friend on my social networking site. An acquaintance of my partner is listed as a friend of mine on my site. I have never met this person but he is linked as my friend through his association with my partner. This inter-connected network of people and pages was advantageous as it enabled me to access potential participants – through pages of existing friends I was able to identify and contact their friends. My decision on whom to contact was based on the content present on their social networking pages. In effect, the network of friends allowed me to filter participants so as to develop a coherent purposive sample – my profile as a

¹⁴ <http://www.myspace.com> and <http://www.bebo.com>.

Heavy Metal fan linked people to my page, and these people had other Metallers listed as their friends (*cf.* Howard, 2002).

Participants who displayed online evidence of membership to the Heavy Metal community, via relevant imagery/symbolism and online blogs,¹⁵ were identified as key informants. Furthermore, because of the media advocacy through the *20/20* television programme, some interested potential participants contacted me directly via email. For example, one participant contacted me via e-mail after the programme screened on air despite not being a regular user of online social networking sites. I decided to include this person in the research because of his ability in email communications to discuss a number of relevant issues concerning material objects and multiple community memberships relating to his employment as an architect. Participants were chosen for their proximity to Hamilton for reasons of time and financial constraint. This geographical proximity enabled me to maintain offline contact with respondents. Offline contact was important with the focus of the research on the relationship between online and offline community interactions. Having identified potential participants via online social networking sites, an initial face-to-face meeting was organised to build rapport with each individual participant.

My interactions with participants recruited online continued offline. Following an initial face-to-face meeting, a semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant. Discussions focused on such topics as the part Heavy Metal music plays in their lives and how their sense of affiliation with other Metallers is expressed across settings (see Appendix A for interview themes). Interviewing is one of the most common forms of data collection within social science research (Fontana & Frey, 2000). While general interview themes were used, these interviews were largely unstructured and open-ended. Such interviews attempt to understand the complex practices and values of participants without limiting too strictly their responses or imposing restrictions on what they say (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

¹⁵ Blogs (short for web logs) are a form of online diary or interactive journal where users write entries to be posted on online pages, often for other people to view and/or make comments (Hodkinson, 2007).

Each participant was asked to bring existing photographs or objects to interviews, items which I could photograph at the time of the interviews. The emphasis of this research upon the routine events of everyday life meant that I wished to make the familiar unfamiliar (*cf.* Chaney, 2002). In other words, I needed to de-familiarise everyday events. Due to the taken-for-granted nature of practices and material objects, there was the potential for participants to find it difficult to articulate their everyday experiences. Images provide insight into the everyday practices through which Metallers construct themselves as social beings. Photographs and related discussions concerning specific locales helped link personal life worlds to wider societal contexts and contestations about the social identity of Metaller. Incorporating photographic methods encouraged participants to consider their own identity and allowed them to express their own symbolic world (Denzin, 1989a). Photographs act as a “means by which people in everyday life can narrate experience, and in this way we can come to some understanding of what those experiences mean” (Harrison, 2002, p. 109). This method may be conceptualised as a form of photo-voice project, where participants are encouraged to provide photographs to illustrate or communicate their perception of situations and events (Holm, 2008).

Context is important, since photographs by themselves are largely meaningless - by providing a context for photographs participants are able to explain what they are trying to show (Kracauer, 1993). In this way, photographs, and the objects depicted in them, can stand for wider social processes and affiliations (*cf.* Selden & Widdowson, 1993). In other words, I traced events, relationships, and practices physically represented in and beyond the objects. These contexts are co-constructed by both participant and researcher. The participant chooses what is to be photographed, what is presented, and how they describe such presentations. The researcher chooses how these photographs and interview data are presented and discussed in the research results (Reavey & Johnson, 2008). Photographs are treated as “versions of reality” co-constructed between the researcher and the participant (Pink, 2005). Further to this, each participant was asked to discuss their Myspace and/or Bebo page(s). This face-to-face discussion of an online artefact provided participants with an opportunity to explain their pages and why they had chosen to portray themselves online.

There were ethical issues surrounding the use of photographic methods, especially in regard to consent and anonymity. In pre-existing photographs taken in private homes brought along by participants, faces of people depicted were blurred using Microsoft Paint. Participants' faces were also blurred in photographs taken of them in public places. However, for those photographs taken of non-participants in public places such as local gigs, no consent was sought because of the public and open nature of these sites: obtaining permission from several people at a local gig, or several thousand at an international concert, would be impossible. Blurring every face contained within public photographs (gigs for example) was also not possible as there were large numbers of people in close proximity to each other. If each face was blurred such photographs would be unusable. On the other hand, images of faces and surnames contained within social networking sites, such as in lists of friends, were blurred to protect anonymity.

Following face-to-face interviews, time was spent with groups of participants and their friends at social gatherings. These social gatherings included attending concerts that featured both local and international acts, as well as informal parties and general "catch ups". Such offline contact served two purposes. Firstly, the direct observation provided a context within which to situate the data gathered by other methods. In ethnography (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987), and the wider social sciences in general (Adler & Adler, 1994), direct observation provides for gathering information not only of people and their activities, but also the places within which these interactions and activities occur (Angrosino & Perez, 2000). Offline contact provided a basis for further online engagements with the community. Often during these meetings I provided research progress updates, verified data, and discussed aspects of media reports of my thesis and Heavy Metal in general. This fieldwork allowed for deep, long lasting relationships to develop (Crewe & Maruna, 2006). In doing this, I was attempting to be accountable to the community I was researching rather than disappearing after the formal data had been collected (Drew, 2006).

Participants

This section provides brief profiles of each of my participants and the nature of my interactions with each person. These profiles provide context for the interactions discussed in detail in my Analysis chapters. Thirteen participants took part in this research, with ages ranging from 19 to 42 years of age. Most participants were male and identified ethnically as New Zealand European. Table 2 summarises the participant profiles. Following the table is a brief description of each participant's background, an outline of their involvement in the Heavy Metal community, and a brief account of my interactions with them.

Table 2: Participant Profiles

Alias ¹⁶	Age (yrs)	Ethnicity ¹⁷	Gender	Occupation	Location
Architect	35	New Zealand European	Male	Architect	Hamilton
Chopper	39	New Zealander	Male	Fitter/Welder	Hamilton
Death	27	New Zealand European	Male	Bank Employee	Auckland
Drummer	30	Maori	Male	Safety Technician	Hamilton
Filf	30	New Zealand European	Male	Sky Installer	Hamilton
Flash Medallion	21	New Zealander	Male	Student & DJ	Hamilton
Horns ov Baphomet	19	New Zealand European	Female	Unemployed	Hamilton
Misery	37	New Zealand European	Female	Immigration Officer	Auckland
Miss Raven	27	New Zealand European	Female	Mother	Tauranga

¹⁶ Participant aliases were mostly self-selected; a discussion of their relationship to identity expression is detailed in the first Analysis chapter. Some participants did not want or feel the need to select an alias and in these instances I chose one that reflected their occupation or interests (e.g., Architect and Drummer).

¹⁷ Ethnic labels contained within this table were self-selected by participants.

Nail	33	New Zealand European	Male	Fencing Contractor	Hamilton
Ripper	19	New Zealand European	Male	Student	Hamilton
<i>Slayer</i> Fan	42	Maori	Female	Lecturer	Hamilton
Space Ghost	19	New Zealand European	Male	Student	Hamilton

Architect is a 35-year-old architect living in Hamilton. When he was an eight-year-old primary school student, Architect was exposed to the music of the band *Iron Maiden*. Since this youthful introduction to Heavy Metal he has been collecting vinyl copies of records released by Heavy Metal bands and has built up a significant collection. To the external observer Architect does not appear to be a Metaller, as he does not feel that he needs to express his identity outwardly through clothing. As he does not identify himself as a Metaller through his clothing, and his occupation, Architect regularly encounters surprise from others when they learn of his membership to the Heavy Metal community. He is not involved in the Heavy Metal community online. Despite this, I selected him for this thesis because of his ability to discuss his collection of Heavy Metal memorabilia, as well as the contrast he provided to other participants who were very visually orientated in expressing their community membership. In addition to Heavy Metal, Architect has an interest in cars and regularly attends car-related events. As he has a heavy workload, my face-to-face interaction with Architect was limited to one interview at his place of business. On 30 March 2011, I re-connected with Architect on Facebook where I provided him with an update on the progress of this research project.

Chopper is a 39-year-old fitter/welder living in Hamilton who works part time in bar security. Heavily tattooed, Chopper plays bass for a local covers band that regularly gigs in Hamilton pubs. Chopper was married but separated from his wife when he was in his early thirties. Chopper's introduction to Heavy Metal was through an appreciation of the skill demonstrated by Heavy Metal guitarists. This appreciation developed as he watched his friends play Heavy Metal covers. The band that he most admires is *Pantera*. Not long after Chopper started listening to *Pantera*, the band's guitarist was shot and killed. In recognition of this event, Chopper had himself

tattooed in ways that express his devotion to the deceased guitarist. While Chopper participates daily in the Heavy Metal community online through Bebo and Myspace, he tries not to become too involved as he does not want to “waste his life sitting in front of a computer”. A month after our initial interview, I twice visited a local Heavy Metal bar with Chopper and took extensive field notes. Since the completion of my formal data gathering, Chopper has become a personal friend and we regularly communicate both online and offline.

Death is a 27-year-old who works as a sales and lending specialist at a bank in Auckland, where he lives. Death is largely a fan of Death Metal, particularly the band *Deicide*. He has played bass and sung in several Auckland Heavy Metal bands. He is extremely laid-back and proudly calls himself a Bogan. Due to his occupation, which is not a stereotypical Bogan career, Death is regularly questioned about his Bogan identity. In response, mainly to avoid further questions, he often tells people he is unemployed. Death has a degree in History from the University of Auckland and he uses his scholarly abilities to defend his Bogan lifestyle to his workmates and employers. A month after the completion of our interview I joined Death's fiancée Misery at a performance of the band with which Death performs. With Misery and Death, I attended local gigs in Auckland approximately once every three months during the period of 2007-2010. Death and Misery have become close friends of mine since the empirical material for this research was completed and I talk to them online both in relation to this research and socially on an almost daily basis.

Drummer is a 30-year-old Fire Safety Technician living in Hamilton. A father of three, Drummer is a drummer for *UTU*, a Hamilton Heavy Metal band. He is extremely laid-back. During the initial discussion about becoming a participant in this study there was some confusion on his part as to the extent of his involvement, so included in his interview are members of *UTU* who are referred to by their role in the band (e.g. Guitarist). Drummer's band regularly gigs in Hamilton and other New Zealand cities, and plays a combination of their own material as well as cover versions of *Metallica*, *Slayer*, and *Sepultura* songs. Between November 2007 and February 2008 I joined Drummer's partner, *Slayer Fan*, in attending four of these gigs.

Filf is a 30-year-old communications and Sky Television installation specialist who lives in Hamilton. Filf plays guitar in a local Heavy Metal band that regularly gigs in local and Auckland pubs. He became a fan of Heavy Metal through hearing *Metallica's* 1989 song "One" – the technical guitar playing on this track inspired Filf to seek-out similar music. While still being a fan of such Thrash Metal songs, Filf's listening habits now tend towards Black Metal bands such as *Immortal* and *Emperor*. He is very open-minded about all forms of Heavy Metal. Filf recently attended Wacken Open Air, one of Europe's leading summer Heavy Metal music festivals, and since then has wanted to travel the world to attend Heavy Metal events. He is a regular crowd surfer and has made it his mission to crowd surf at every event he attends, including parties at friends' houses. Filf's crowd surfing zeal has got him into trouble with event security, and he has in fact been detained several times. He has experience in multimedia work and is responsible for his band's official website as well as his personal Myspace site. I attended a local gig with Filf in January, 2008 and also talked with him at a *Lamb of God* concert (10 December 2009). Filf's band *Carnage* was also one of the bands that played during the gig organised for the *20/20* television programme.

Flash Medallion is a 21-year-old university student studying engineering. Flash Medallion lives in Hamilton, plays guitar and has part-time work as a disc-jockey at a local non-Metal club. He listens to a variety of Heavy Metal bands and genres, as well as other forms of music, and has an extensive knowledge of bands. He first began listening to Classic Rock music, which then led to an appreciation for Heavy Metal. While Flash Medallion mostly enjoys older Heavy Metal bands such as *Motorhead* and *Iron Maiden*, his current favourite band is the more contemporary *Rammstein*. He regularly attends larger international concerts, but his occupation means he is unable to go to more local events. He has his own Bebo site, but uses it only semi-regularly. Flash Medallion was among a group of friends who accompanied me to a *Motorhead* concert in New Plymouth (19 October 2007).

Horns ov Baphomet (H.O.B.) is a 19-year-old who is currently unemployed and living in Hamilton. Her initial exposure to Heavy Metal was when she was approximately 17-years-old - a friend with whom she communicated online introduced her to the band *Iron Maiden*. From this introduction H.O.B. quickly progressed to listening to heavier music, developing a particular liking for Death and Black Metal. She has very

strong opinions on what is “true” Heavy Metal, and voices these opinions vehemently online. H.O.B, spends a significant amount of time online communicating with friends, many of whom live in her home town of Lower Hutt. Since completing the collection of empirical material, I lost touch with H.O.B. until December of 2010, when we began communicating on a weekly basis via Facebook.

Misery, mentioned in Death’s description above, is a 37-year-old immigration officer living in Auckland. She originally discovered Heavy Metal through listening to Rock bands such as *Guns n Roses* and *Alice Cooper*. Largely through the influence of her fiancée Death, whom she met through an Internet dating site, Misery developed an interest in such heavier bands as *Cradle of Filth* and *Cannibal Corpse*. She has three children to her former husband, with one of the children being named after the lead singer of *Alice Cooper*. Misery became a central member of the Auckland Heavy Metal scene through her involvement in a local Heavy Metal venue, Hysteria, and through her regular use of Myspace and Bebo.

Miss Raven is a 27-year-old single mother of two living in Tauranga. Her introduction to Heavy Metal was as a 14-year-old listening to bands such as *Pantera*, *Metallica*, and *Rage against the Machine* at local parties. When Miss Raven moved from the Far North to Tauranga she became heavily involved in the music scene through a local pub, Krazy Jacks. Since becoming a mother, Miss Raven has devoted most of her time to her children. Her involvement in the Heavy Metal community tends to be through online sites such as Bebo and Myspace. Being limited to online interactions, Miss Raven does not consider herself as being heavily involved in the Heavy Metal community. Instead she considers her community to be her family and geographical neighbours. Since the completion of our interview I have kept in touch with Miss Raven, communicating with her approximately monthly through her social networking site.

Nail is a 33-year-old fencing contractor living in Hamilton. Nail is a guitarist for a well known Hamilton Heavy Metal band that regularly tours nationally. His involvement in Heavy Metal began while at secondary school through listening to the music of such bands as *Metallica*, *Black Sabbath*, and *Sepultura*. Nail’s interest in Heavy Metal stemmed from his appreciation of the level of skill displayed by the guitarists in those bands. Nail continues to prefer older styles of Heavy Metal, although he has

embraced the music of such contemporary bands as *System of a Down*, *Tool*, *Slipknot*, and *Shadows Fall*. While Nail feels the Internet is a good way to engage with fans, and he has his own Myspace page, he considers himself as something of a technological Luddite, arguing: “If it doesn’t have a pull start or you can’t put gas in it, I don’t know how to work it”. Recently Nail has limited his use of online communication in favour of concentrating on developing his guitar playing. I attended a gig that Nail’s band played at the local Rock bar Axces on the 17 April 2008.

Ripper is a 19-year-old university student studying chemistry and lives in Hamilton. While his father listened to a great deal of Rock music, Ripper’s first experience with Heavy Metal was through the online discovery of the Death Metal bands *Cannibal Corpse* and *Bloodbath*. Since this exposure, as a 16-year-old, Ripper has developed a strong interest in Black Metal. While Ripper is reasonably open-minded about the “worth” of sub-genres, he has strong opinions on “true” Heavy Metal. He tends to avoid using the term Bogan to describe himself because of its negative connotations, but accepts it as a compliment if that is its intended function. He spends a significant amount of time online, not only on Myspace and Bebo but also reading various band histories through official band websites and “social dictionaries” such as Wikipedia.¹⁸ Ripper attended the *20/20* gig. We also attended an international concert, *Carcass*, along with Space Ghost on the 15 October 2008. I keep in touch with Ripper on a weekly basis through our social networking sites.

Slayer Fan is 42, works as a lecturer, and lives in Hamilton. She is in a relationship with Drummer. *Slayer* Fan and Drummer are the only participants who identified themselves as Māori. Her introduction to Heavy Metal was through the bands *Iron Maiden* and *Slayer*. *Slayer* Fan acts as an informal manager for Drummer’s band, and is responsible for the band’s Myspace site. She also has her own personal Myspace web-page. Drummer and *Slayer* Fan regularly attend international and local Heavy Metal concerts, and at international concerts try to get as close to the stage as they can. *Slayer* Fan has passed on her interest in Heavy Metal to her younger brother – who is the vocalist for Drummer’s band - but despite her best attempts she has not been able to convince her children of the pleasure of Heavy

¹⁸ Wikipedia is an online, free-content, encyclopaedia project. It is written collaboratively by largely anonymous Internet volunteers who self-monitor and correct any attempts at vandalism or publishing of misinformation (www.wikipedia.org).

Metal music. Since the completion of my fieldwork I lost contact with *Slayer* Fan for a period of a year. In February of 2011 I re-connected with her via Facebook.

Space Ghost is a 19-year-old university student studying chemistry and lives in Hamilton. A bass guitar player, Space Ghost was introduced to Heavy Metal by some musician friends. From initial exposure to commercially successful Heavy Metal bands such as *Rammstein*, Space Ghost developed an interest in Black Metal bands such as *Emperor*, *Bathory*, and *Sonata Arctica*. While Space Ghost spends a significant amount of time online, his involvement in Internet Heavy Metal discussion forums tends to be as an observer rather than a contributor. Space Ghost sees engaging in such conversations as pointless – he does not believe they affect his opinions or those of others and that they are largely just attempts to instigate arguments. Along with attending *Carcass* with Space Ghost and Ripper, I also keep in touch with Space Ghost on a weekly basis through social networking sites.

The researcher

A key element of ethnographic research is for the researcher to disclose their history and positioning in relation to their fieldwork and writing (Willis, 2000). This “theoretical confession” enables the researcher to reflect on the meaning of research data, particularly field work. Such reflections help mitigate the potential ethnographer’s trap of being descriptive rather than analytical. In this section, I “confess” that I am a member of the Heavy Metal community and label myself both as a Bogan and a Metaller. This membership means that my position is both a fan of Heavy Metal music and an academic researcher. As I am conducting research with a community to which I belong, my research approach is auto-ethnographic (Berger, 2001). Such research is useful in understanding the everyday lives of communities as it provides multiple interpretations and experiences both from participants and the researcher (Ellis, 2004; Rappaport, 1993). This is not to say that the researcher takes the focus away from participants; rather the researcher adds to the understanding of the topic by contributing additional context, reflections, layers of experience, and analysis (Berger, 2001; Ellis, 2004).

As a hybrid researcher/participant I am both a member of the community, participating in its shared practices and an observer, documenting and analysing community practices. Hodkinson (2002) has considered the extent to which a researcher can be an insider, even if they are a member of the community. For example, differences in ethnicity, age or gender may cause division between the researcher and community members. An appropriate level of insider knowledge can, however, aid participants in feeling suitably comfortable about divulging intimate and relevant information (*cf.* Hodkinson, 2005). Participants who perceive the researcher as having an appreciation of their community and practices often provide a level of detail in their responses that are not facilitated through interaction with “outsider” researchers (Crewe & Maruna, 2006). In other words, my insider status contributes to richer research engagements with my participants.

I was also a frequent user of Myspace and Bebo.¹⁹ Prior to undertaking the research, my involvement with Night Visions, a Heavy Metal club at the University of Waikato, underpinned my interest in Myspace. A Night Visions member developed a Myspace page as a way of advertising events and communicating with club members. Soon after this page went “live” other Night Vision members began linking to it. Around this time friends who had MySpace pages encouraged me to follow their example. With help from these friends I set-up a personal Myspace page. It was not long before I realised the usefulness of Myspace in terms of communicating with existing friends and developing new friendships with people who shared similar interests to me.

The overall design of my Myspace page expressed the large part Heavy Metal plays in my identity. For example, the page was listed under the name Burton C. Bogan. This is an alias I adopted in 2005 when I began writing the weekly “Boganology 101” column for *Nexus*, the student magazine of the University of Waikato. I employed this alias as many Night Vision members knew me as the author of “Boganology 101”. My profile picture, a photograph or image used to represent the user online, is of a modified road sign with the words “God Listens...to *Slayer!*” I employed this image as it links to my atheistic views, my enjoyment of *Slayer's* music, and my appreciation of the humorous connotations of the photograph. My personal details contained on the page reflected my liking for Heavy Metal, British television comedy,

¹⁹ www.myspace.com/boganology and www.bebo.com/boganologist

and semi-classical literature. On my profile I described my writing for *Nexus* and the Hamilton-based Heavy Metal magazine *Sic*. My friends list²⁰ included my sister, close friends, fellow Metallers, as well as local and international Heavy Metal bands and magazines. Also present on my page is a media player that plays the song “Descending” by the Heavy Metal band *Lamb of God*. I chose this song because it is a personal favourite of my mine and had personal meaning relating to my religious views.

My interest in Bebo began when several friends switched from Myspace to Bebo, a change based on Bebo being easier to use than Myspace. Since the only way I had of keeping in touch with these friends was via online communication, I also created a Bebo web-page. My Bebo site included largely the same information as my Myspace page. Key differences were that my Bebo page did not contain a media player (as I was unsure of how to do this), and it offered an alternative selection of photographs (which I chose to make Bebo aesthetically different to Myspace). My Bebo and Myspace pages have changed over time, as have those of my participants, with new photographs taking precedence due to events in my life and new information being included as it comes to my attention.

The paragraphs above illustrate why social networking sites are important in relation to the Heavy Metal community, and to this research. While my initial website started as a poorly used advertising board for Night Visions, my ongoing presence on social networking sites has been and continues to be a highly effective means of keeping in touch with friends and the wider Heavy Metal community. Through an online presence I am able to communicate with a range of people locally and internationally, as well being able to keep up-to-date with local and national events. Such communications and interactions play important roles in the creation and development of identities (Goodings et al., 2007; Theberge, 2005). The positive outcomes highlight why I incorporated aspects of online interaction into this thesis –

²⁰ A friends list is a list of individual users' social network pages that are linked to the user's profile page, with each link represented by a photographic hyperlink. Pages become connected and featured on a friends list via the user receiving a short email message requesting the link, which they then can choose to accept and establish a link or alternatively may ignore.

fan-oriented social networking sites are good examples of how online interactions are a part of everyday life (Theberge, 2005).

In addition to being central to how I recruited participants, my Bebo and Myspace pages were initially employed to disseminate research information. With the advent of Facebook, which occurred after the collection of research material was completed; twelve of my participants deleted or no longer maintained their Bebo or Myspace pages and began using this new site. Architect, a previously offline participant, also created a Facebook account. In recognition of this, I also switched my interactions and updates from Bebo and Myspace to Facebook.²¹ Regular updates, such as interview themes, were posted on my web pages as a means of informing the Heavy Metal community of my research progress. Open-access updates also allowed those not involved in formal data collection to contribute to thesis-related discussions. In this way, my online sites were used to provide responsible feedback to the community. Online pages were a means of being responsive to the community as part of an ongoing relationship that began prior to the research and would continue after its completion. This approach provided for ethical and honest relationships as a member of several communities, both online and offline.

My membership to the Metaller community and use of social networking sites allowed for familiarity with participants. Membership also came with the potential for me to overlook certain practices or processes that I also took-for-granted. I attempted to address this tension around my insider status and the need for analytic distance through the use of outsider supervision by Professor Darrin Hodgetts and Dr Colin McLeay. This reflected an attempt to integrate both etic (outsider) and emic (insider) positions. In this research project, my supervisors' outsider positioning was used to draw attention to the ways in which this community differed from wider society (*cf.* Pike, 1967). They are not Heavy Metal fans and so were able to identify important insights that I may have overlooked due to these practices and processes being a part of my everyday experiences. My insider positioning was used to identify how a Metaller identity is created and functions in everyday life (*cf.* Pike, 1967). In this way, both positions were drawn upon in the analysis of the empirical material.

²¹ <http://www.facebook.com/burtoncbogan>

Another tension that resulted from my position as a hybrid researcher was my status as a sub-cultural spokesman. This tension was exacerbated by the media coverage this research project received. As a result of the media profile of my research I continue to be contacted to give my opinion on issues related to Heavy Metal or Bogans. For example, I was asked by a leading New Zealand newspaper to comment on media awards given to a television show that focuses on a Bogan family (Eames, 2007). I was asked to comment on this television show despite never having watched it. This created tension within the community for me in that I encountered some people who viewed me as a “know it all” or “not Metal enough to know”. One example of this was during the University of Waikato concert event hosted for the *20/20* programme. A group of Skinheads confronted me, identifying them as such by challenging my knowledge of Heavy Metal via an invitation to attend a Skinhead party to “show [me] what it’s really about”. The face-to-face confrontation illustrated how inclusion in community and spokesperson status can be highly contested. This situation required me to continually assess my positioning, adjusting my presence in relation to the views and reactions of participants, a common tension in auto-ethnographic research (*cf.* Hodkinson, 2005). The tension was also addressed through corresponding with participants before conducting the research, largely through online methods, so that participants could gauge my level of knowledge through music-based discussions. If participants did not perceive me as having sufficient sub-cultural knowledge, or not being enough of an insider, then they would not participate and any face-to-face hostility would be avoided.

My attempt to achieve a sense of critical distance seems to be in contrast to definitions of auto-ethnography that perceive it as introspective research that includes a personal, authorial voice in the writing (e.g., Ellis & Bochner’s, 2000). Attempting to include personal narratives within auto-ethnographic work is difficult when one does not want to overshadow participants’ experiences through personal reflection. This research is clearly informed by my community membership but it is not just about me. Ellis (2004) describes her attempts to include personal introspection in her own work:

I think and gather information like an ethnographer, but I try to write like a novelist or story teller. Auto-ethnographic writing goes hand in hand with fictional techniques such as dialogue, scene setting and plot development (p. 335).

Auto-ethnographers based in anthropology, on the other hand, recognise the need to balance the insights provided by both researcher and other community members, and in the process emphasise the need to maintain a sense of emotional and social detachment (Punyodyana, 1969). Some even go so far as to describe their research approach as a community member's attempt to "impersonate a...anthropologist" (Cutlerio, 1971, p. vii), while others have described their attempts as a way of being a marginal native, on the fringes of their own community (Freilich, 1970). From this, it seems that a key tension within auto-ethnography is balancing personal reflection with participant experiences in order to further develop academic knowledge. While not wanting to emotionally or socially detach myself from my community, I did recognise the need to critically distance myself and so made a stylistic choice to restrict the number of personal reflections that were written into this research. I wanted the research to be primarily about my participants and their interactions, rather than a personal diary.

Analysis

Before detailing my approach to analysing the empirical materials, it is important to note that identity and community are complex processes, and while such phenomena can be explored in the way that I have outlined, research can never fully capture lived experience. Everyday life is messy and complex (Kincheloe, 2001) and so while I attempted to explore my participants' lives in a systematic and accurate way, words can never precisely describe what it is like for the people involved. Lived experience is subjective and difficult to articulate, and that is why social psychology cannot fully predict peoples' behaviour. Having said that, adopting a systematic, multi-method approach represented an attempt to investigate and explain everyday life that provides and allows for a greater level of flexibility and adaptability than any single experimental or other quantitative approach could provide.

Engagements with my thirteen participants left me with a collection of empirical materials that comprised thirteen participant interview transcripts, twelve social networking site screen shots, eighty photographs, and extensive field notes detailing specific events and conversations. This corpus offered multiple forms of overlapping

material regarding the placement, meaning, and everyday practices related to the use of Heavy Metal music across a range of online and offline settings. My multifaceted approach allowed me to look within everyday experiences to explore what it means to be a Metaller across places. The use of photographs depicting material objects and people added depth to my information about each participant and provided a useful way of defamiliarising their everyday experiences. These methods helped to make the familiar unfamiliar by forcing participants to consider more deeply their taken-for-granted routines that are central to everyday life (Chaney, 2002).

My analysis of these materials was guided by the overall aims of this study. Everyday practices and life in general is complex, and so to be successful, analytic processes could not be derived from just one disciplinary or methodological orientation (Kincheloe, 2001). The aims of this study and the complexities of daily practice, identity, and community reflected in the empirical materials collated, required me to work inter-disciplinarily and to adopt this form of analysis described by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) as a bricoleur.

I analysed the corpus of participant material systematically through four phases. Throughout the phases of analysis I adopted an abductive research strategy. Abductive research places significant emphasis on empirical data collected in the field, which is then interpreted through the lens of academic theory. In abductive approaches, empirical material is analysed with a view to interpreting participant accounts and experiences. Once a plausible explanation is identified, this is further extended and developed through existing academic literature in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the empirical material (Haig, 2008). In this way, academic knowledge and the everyday experiences of research participants are brought into conversation in order to extend theoretical explanations of social processes.

Phase one involved exploring interview transcripts, investigating how each participant discussed their experiences in relation to the broad interview themes (Appendix A). A focus on participation and the importance of material objects was confirmed as a key feature of research participants' experiences. The analysis considered how participant accounts reflected wider identity formations and what part Heavy Metal music played in identity and community. In addition, other themes

were uncovered relating to participation in the Metaller community across sites and multiple online and offline community memberships.

In phase two, photographs were evaluated as to their relationship to interview transcripts. The primary concern was how communal life was represented in concrete terms. This analytic framework allowed me to unfold the ways in which participants use visual imagery to mediate their understandings of what it means to be a Metaller. In this way, analysis moved between text and image for each participant, on a case-by-case basis, and then between participants in terms of their images and what they told me about their experiences of being a Metaller. There were two key aims when analysing these forms of data. Firstly, to determine links between specific parts of the transcript and particular photographs, so that pictures (or things denoted in them) might be seen to exemplify something about that person's experience of Heavy Metal. Secondly, to find in the particularity of their accounts ways in which being a Metaller are represented symbolically, spatially, and visually.

Phase three of the analysis involved a tour of research participants' websites during which they discussed their experiences of online engagement with their community. This required a similar analysis to the photographs, where images were related to transcripts. This phase of the analysis moved beyond the description of specific representations or stories to broader observations about the ways in which social relationships are rendered meaningful through mediated and interpersonal communication online.

Phase four involved socialising with participants at concerts and band performances. As I engaged with participants I made field notes to record events and responses, with the focus on how participants used the music in these social situations to interact with others. Here I drew on insights from the practice-orientated approach to media research proposed by Couldry (2004). My own observations and experiences also provided an important backdrop to the interpretation of material produced through more formal interview and photographic methods and a source of insight into everyday Metaller practices. It is important here that theory does not take away the primacy of participant experiences.

Empirical material from each of the four phases was grouped together in themes. Each theme was then compared to the overall aims of the research project, and selected for inclusion in the analysis based on how well I felt they fulfilled these aims. Literature was used to explain participants' account, while at the same time their accounts were used to build upon academic theory as a resource for informing my interpretation of what was happening in the data. In this way, the relationship between empirical material and existing academic literature was dialectical.

Identified themes were then put in a logical sequence in order to convey my participants' everyday experiences. During the course of my analysis it became apparent that there were a number of sites that were important in the development of my research participants' life worlds. In recognition of this, I have structured my analysis chapters according to place. In Chapter Three I examine the intimate space of the body. I conceptualise it as a personal site for the expression of identity and community which is taken out into the world to interact with other bodies. This mobilisation of identity and community is achieved by my research participants through their physical appearance. Stylisations that include material objects, such as clothing, and tattoos are used to not only represent identity but to encourage interactions with others (Chaney, 2002; Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Te Awekotuku et al., 2007). These embodied identities are also used to differentiate a Metaller community from other groups (*cf.* Sibley, 1995; Tajfel, 1981).

In Chapter Four I examine a range of geographical locations within and across which my research participants became actively involved in the Metaller community. This is presented in a diminishing scale that begins with the large scale concert, before moving to more localised environments such as bars and private dwellings. I then turn to the online environment of social networking sites, which I conceptualise as both private and public spaces. These sites are private, as they contain a significant amount of personal information. Simultaneously, they are also public as they are available for freely available for viewing by other users. Taken together, these two analysis chapters examine the fabric of everyday life, which consists of a number of places that people weave together in the creation of their life worlds.

CHAPTER THREE: IDENTITY, EMBODIMENT, AND THE NEGOTIATION OF COMMUNITY

The participants in my research project develop and express a Metaller identity through interactions with other people and objects. Through these interactions they foster a sense of community. Central to communal life amongst Heavy Metal fans is involvement in shared activities through which a sense of belonging and shared identity can be cultivated (Korpela, 1989; Merriam et al., 2003; Snell & Hodgetts, 2007; Wenger, 1998). A common theme in this chapter is the ways in which identity extends into material and social worlds (e.g., Hermans, 2001; James, 1890) through material objects (Miller, 1987) and the body (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). In the first section I consider my participants' use of music and associated interactions in the process of creating a social identity as Metallers. Engaging with the music and with other fans provides opportunities for building community ties. Here I explore identity formation as an interactive process that is central to community (Charon, 1979; Kaufman, 2000).

In the second section of this chapter, I examine the use of material objects as visual methods for identity expression (Miller, 1987). Following the ideas of William James (1890), modern scholars propose that objects are meaningful and that peoples' perceptions and actions in the world tie them to objects both physically and psychologically (Fuller, 1990). In other words, material objects are an important part of everyday life due to their function as representations of identity and community (Sheringham, 2006). The presentation of identity is not limited to single objects. Identities can be expressed through collections of material objects (Noble, 2004). My discussion of the cumulative process of identity in the first section of this chapter is expanded upon in the second section in relation to materiality. There is also a cumulative aspect of material culture in relation to identity and community. Material objects are cumulative in that collections of objects represent the collection of experiences that constitute the self. On the one hand, there is the collection of

experiences that constitute the self; on the other, a collection of objects that represent these experiences and memories (Noble, 2004). Thus, collections provide a snapshot of identity at a given point in time. This illustrates how the meanings people have for objects are developed interactionally as people not only collect objects but also adapt such objects (Thompson, 1995) or create their own (Hills, 2002).

Many material objects used in the expression of identity are also transportable (Connor, 2002). A relevant example is items of clothing, which are everyday material objects worn on the body. Items of clothing are one way that identity is performed through the body (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). In the social sciences this is termed embodiment (*cf.* Cromby, 2005; Frith & Gleeson, 2004). I investigate the embodiment of identity through decoration that includes material objects (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). Combinations of clothing can be characterised as stylisation, where symbolic aspects of material culture are exaggerated during everyday life as conduits for culture (Chaney, 2002). Stylisations of Metaller bodies also include hair styles and accessories (such as wrist bands), which represent and connect people to their communities (Chaney, 2002; Snell & Hodgetts, 2007).

In the third section of this chapter I investigate further issues of embodiment, this time in relation to the presentation of identity and communal affiliations through the practice of tattooing. Tattoos often represent important people, things, places, and events in the wearer's life and so are a way of depicting identity on the body (DeMello, 2000). In addition, tattoos function as a focal point for discussion and interaction. People construct and develop their identities through discussions and interactions incorporating their physical bodies, described in this chapter through the concept of bodyscape. This idea is used to view the body as a process to be built upon, that comprises both a physical entity and a social practice that is used to experience community (Snell et al., 2011). The body is dialectical, being constructed through the responses of others (Gleeson & Frith, 2006). Tattoos represent visual monuments on the body that link the wearer to their life worlds (*cf.* Favro, 2006; Te Awekotuku et al., 2007). Through these linkages, tattoos can come to represent community affiliations as a way of picturing the external world (Back, 2004). It is a process whereby the body is an interactional site for community that is physically altered to represent such linkages.

Embodiment through material objects has also been conceptualised by scholars as a method of enforcing what community psychology has traditionally referred to as boundaries (e.g., McMillan, 1996; Paechter, 2003; Sibley, 1995). In the fourth section of this chapter I examine how items of clothing are used to differentiate Metallers from other groups. In the process, distance is established through the performance of a Metaller identity. Boundaries have been described by community psychology as a way to separate groups, enabling groups to define who can be a member, as well as where and when a group can exist (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Those who do not fit the criteria for group membership are made to feel unwelcome through physical practices and symbolic displays, referred to as psychological boundaries (Hodkinson, 2007; Paechter, 2003). Items such as Heavy Metal T-shirts often depict anti-social symbols including skulls and demons that can make non-Metallers feel uncomfortable (Brown, 2007). Stylisations are a way for my participants to create distance between themselves and other groups. Such performances of identity and community are a means of conferring value on group membership, and occur in both offline and online settings.

Users of social networking sites also create this sense of distance through psychological boundaries (*cf.* Hodkinson, 2007). When conducting research in virtual places, some conceptualisations of Internet use describe the web as a limitless space. Computer mediated communication (CMC) has been described as having the potential to remove psychological boundaries that result from differences in nationality, ethnicity, language, and ideology (Hiltz & Turoff, 1978). Researchers use terms such as “global village” to describe the breakdown of boundaries, with the world becoming an all inclusive society through the ability of CMCs to connect people from around the world (*cf.* Postmes et al., 1998).²² However, social networking sites also raise psychological boundaries, as certain people are made to feel unwelcome (Hodkinson, 2007). In an online context, this is achieved through posting derogatory or contradictory comments (Vrooman, 2002).

²² It is important to note that due to the financial cost of owning a computer and maintaining an Internet account, not everyone has access to a computer or the Internet, which creates a further boundary.

These boundaries are negotiable. People often belong to multiple communities that they negotiate across through emphasising or repositioning various aspects of self (Hermans, 2001). As I discussed in the third section of the Introduction chapter, due to the dynamic and fluid nature of these demarcations communal boundaries are re-conceptualised as thresholds. Such thresholds can be negotiated through changes in appearance, for example tattoos can be covered up or clothing changed. With this in mind, the fourth section of this chapter also focuses on the use of material objects in negotiating across inter-group thresholds. The mobile nature of identity across various places is further developed in Chapter Four.

Adapting a social identity

Contemporary ideas regarding identity and community which are central to my research may be traced back to the nineteenth century work of social psychologist William James. His conceptualisation of self, along with the later work of other scholars (e.g., Charon, 1979; Hermans, 2001; Hodgetts et al., 2010a), recognised the external and interactional nature of the self. People draw upon external resources, such as media, in the creation of their identities (Hodgetts & Chamberlain, 2007; Hodgetts et al., 2010a). Music can be played at concerts, in cafes, cars, homes, elevators, and websites, providing a readily available resource for the development and maintenance of identities (Silverstone, 1999). Conceptualisations such as James' (1890) recognised that there is a part of social identity that maintains a sense of continuity. Other identity theorists point to the self as capable of changing and transforming over the course of one's life, described as the transformative self (Strauss, 1969). Combining these perspectives acknowledges that while there is a core sense of self that remains stable over time, there is still an element of change. In other words, identity is developed through sustained interactions with other people as an ongoing and cumulative process (Mead, 1934). Identities are then shared with others in order to experience community (Kroger, 1996). In extending identity into communal life, people develop social networks which support and reaffirm their community memberships. In this section I examine the development of a Metaller identity over time and how, in sharing this identity with others, my participants developed affiliations to community.

For my participants, a Heavy Metal identity was an aspect of self that remained constant over time. Many identified the development of this identity in their early teens, and this identity was then further developed as they interacted with other Metallers. This kind of process was described by Chopper, when discussing the development of his Metaller identity:

Cos when I was a kid, going back to even 12 years old, Bat Out Of Hell²³ was all the rage. Further on and then *Iron Maiden* and *AC/DC* came along when I was in mid-teens and I started to get into that ... but it all sorta filtered away when I met the one who was eventually to become my wife and got married. Everything else just sort of didn't disappear but got pushed to one side a bit and all of her younger brothers were getting into the likes of *Rage* and *Metallica* and I was like yeah that's pretty cool and then they started talking about *Pantera*, *Korn*, and *Tool*. I listened to some of that and I was like 'That's kind of harsh for my taste'. Up until I guess maybe early 30s even, I got to know some mates up in Whangarei. After me and her split up I ... met some guys up there who were playing in a covers band and they played covers and seeing someone actually play [*Pantera*] I was like 'Wow that's pretty impressive stuff' ... It was then that I actually started to get into the heavier sort of stuff and consequently moved back here after a coupla years and started working in the pubs down here again and through that I met up with [a friend] and 6ft Under²⁴ happened and I was spending a lot of time down there ... and I started to get into it and at that stage I was starting to learn how to play it myself so sorta started getting into it a bit more.

His story encompasses a sense of continuity throughout his life as experiences build upon each other through his discussion of Heavy Metal music (*cf.* James, 1890; *cf.* Noble, 2004). Heavy Metal has been a core aspect of Chopper's personal identity, even as his life has moved through different phases and experiences. He presents the music as being central to interpersonal relationships, linking people, places, and practices. Heavy Metal is a constant element of Chopper's sense of self, albeit an

²³ An album by the Rock musician *Meatloaf*.

²⁴ 6ft Under was a Hamilton Heavy Metal bar, that is now no longer in business.

element that recedes or comes to the fore in conjunction with wider social events. Chopper's Metaller identity may wane due to other commitments (such as marriage) and experiences but it never disappears.

In recognising these shifts, Chopper's story exposes his identity as a cumulative process (Kaufman, 2000). His autobiographical account also exemplifies a sense of change over time. These shifts in identity exemplify a dialogical self (Hermans, 2001), with his Metaller identity in dialogue with other roles and identities. His experiences highlight the importance of context and interaction in the (re)development and (re)positioning of a Metaller identity in relation to other aspects of self. Thus, Chopper's identity was initially focused on the music as a teen. From this initial focus Chopper found his engagement with Heavy Metal was "pushed to one side". Chopper's wife was not a Heavy Metal fan and so the music played a significantly lessened role in their relationship. As a result this Metaller identity was de-emphasised. After he separated from his wife, Chopper returned to his original passion and Metaller identity as it became a more significant part of his life. He began to engage in sustained interactions with other Metallers, which were facilitated through learning to play an instrument and attending local gigs. Chopper has shifted the position and presentation of his Metaller identity, a process intimately linked to these relationship changes and his efforts to strengthen bonds with the Heavy Metal community. It is to this communal nature of identity that I now turn in more detail.

Much like other group affiliations, music based community formation begins with individuals sharing interests which bring them together and provide a starting point for future interactions (Marti, 2009). As a form of media, Heavy Metal music can serve as common ground between individuals (*cf.* Brooker, 2002). Identifying with others who are perceived as similar or who share similar interests is an important part of identity formation and maintenance (Ethier & Deaux, 1994). As explained by Misery, Heavy Metal music plays a key role in not only her Metaller identity but also in related social networks:

It's pretty much everything, like our whole life revolves around music and gigs and bands and doing singing and making music as well as listening to it and partying and all of that. Basically when we're not watching TV we've got music on and we've got a huge stack of CDs in the car so we'll just go driving and listen to music.

That's what [Death] and I, what we've got in common, what got us together.

Music is incorporated into a variety of aspects in Misery's life. It is a common interest she shares with her partner Death; she describes it as one of the reasons they met. Misery and Death take this shared identity with them throughout their everyday lives. Music, and an associated media-based identity, has permeated many different aspects and contexts of Misery's everyday life, such as driving in the family car, and plays a key role in her relationship with her fiancée. As a common ground and shared interest, music textures their interactions and relationship. Their identities are mobile and are inter-woven not only with each other, but also into the lives of other people. In addition to consuming music, Misery and Death produce music through their band. This strengthens the emotional attachment she has to Death and Heavy Metal music, suggesting a nuanced view of music in identity formation and maintenance. In other words, music becomes more than the communication of political ideologies suggested in some previous media-based research (e.g., Carney, 1974). Instead listeners have a sense of agency and engage with music in order to interact and develop relationships with others (*cf.* Couldry, 2004; Snell & Hodgetts, 2007).

Sharing aesthetic tastes in music not only results in personal relationships but can also be used in the development of communities (*cf.* Brooker, 2002; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). The term social identity is used to describe the way in which self-representations are extended into groups and everyday life (Jenkins, 2004; *cf.* Kroger, 1996). This process is taken up in more detail in the second analysis chapter in relation to practices and places. For now I want to focus on how my participants used notions of community, belonging or safety to describe their investment in Heavy Metal (*cf.* McMillan, 1996). This is highlighted by Filf, who used a discussion of the stereotype of Metallers to consider Heavy Metal as a community.

I think [mainstream society] think[s] we're trouble makers, strange people, strange trouble makers who make a lot of noise. Get drunk. It is true, we do make a lot of noise and get drunk, but we also look after each other ... all the Metallers I hang out with are all nice people who look after each other. They're not thieves, they're not

violent, they're not; they're just fun. Get on the piss,²⁵ listen to some Metal. Try to meet women; Metal chicks. Yeah ... its good shit. It's like a family ... the kind of family that look after each other.

To Filf, Metallers are not only interested in alcohol and loud music but also care for other community members, providing a sense of safety (*cf.* McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Filf illustrates how he perceives himself as an extension of the group in that he feels that he shares characteristics of both excess (drunken behaviour) and social responsibility (caring for others). Through these similarities in his personal sense of self and his perception of other Metallers, Filf reaffirms his positive community membership (*cf.* Abrams, 1992). Both his personal and social identities are supported by a network of relationships. In sharing his personal identity with others, Filf experiences a sense of belonging. This sharing of identity moves beyond an individualistic concept to the acknowledgement of an element of community involvement (Arnow, 1994).

In sum, identity is a cumulative process that incorporates notions of both stability and change (Hermans, 2001; James, 1890; Noble, 2004). For my participants, a core sense of self as a Metaller is in dialogue with other identities as people reposition themselves in response to changing contexts (Hermans, 2001). This acknowledgement of the role of context recognises that identity is developed interactionally through sharing it with other people (Kaufman, 2000). Other people play a key role in the development of identity (Arnow, 1994). Media, and in the case of Metallers especially music, provides a resource that brings people together to interact (*cf.* Brooker, 2002). Through sharing and extending identity into community life, people experience feelings of belonging and safety (Kroger, 1996; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In the following sections I discuss the presentation of identity and community through material objects and the body.

²⁵ To "get on the piss" in this context means to drink alcohol.

Material objects and stylisation

Material objects have been described as a way of visually representing identity (Garner, 2004). Continuing the themes developed in the first section of this chapter, material objects are a way of extending the self into the physical world to encourage interactions with others (*cf.* James, 1890). Heavy Metal music provides a range of options and opportunities for expressing identity and participating in community through various items of memorabilia (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Material objects function as expressions of identity (Garner, 2004). Displaying such objects presents opportunities for interactions through which the connections discussed in the previous section can be developed (Tilley, 2006). As people connect with others and develop their identities and communal ties, they collect objects that represent this cumulative set of experiences (Noble, 2004). These collections serve as a form of souvenir that link their owners to other times, people, places, and events (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005). This process reflects the way in which objects are not only gathered, but also that the meanings for these collections are developed through social interaction (Hurdley, 2006; Noble, 2004). This has been described as a process of appropriation by which people not only purchase items, but adapt and alter these objects and their associated meanings (Thompson, 1995). Through routine use, these objects become normalised and are a part of their owner's everyday routine (Kahn-Harris, 2007). A particularly relevant example of these processes is clothing, which is a way of representing identity on the body (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). These embodied expressions of identity are worn in everyday life and used to mobilise identity (Cromby, 2005). This has been described as stylisation, where combinations of objects are used to represent identity and encourage interactions with other like-minded people as they go about their daily lives (Chaney, 2002). In this section I examine the use of material objects to express and develop identity in everyday life.

Due to the significant role of Heavy Metal in the construction of identity, aspects of the music are incorporated into a wide variety of objects – from *Metallica* action figures to car license plates to posters and wallets. A key material object discussed by participants is the Heavy Metal T-shirt. These T-shirts are items of clothing that

depict band logos and album art. For many participants, they are a way to express and advertise their Metaller identities and encourage interaction. The function of clothing in expressing identity through the body will be extended later in this section via the concept of embodiment, but it is mentioned here as it provides an introduction to the use of material objects as expressions of identity. In the interview passage below, Nail describes the function of material objects after another Metaller walked past us and acknowledged him when we met outside his apartment:

It happened just before when we were sitting downstairs, a girl with a *Slipknot* shirt on just went [nods], gave me a smile and a nod and it's like don't know that person and never met before but it's kind of an unspoken mutual kind of respect or understanding for each other I guess.

Items such as T-shirts can function as signs of community members' ties to a larger system of which the individual is a part (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Cullum-Swan & Manning, 1994). They also provide opportunities to interact with other people to further develop identity and communal ties (*cf.* Silverstone, 1999; Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). The Heavy Metal T-shirts that both Nail and the girl are wearing highlight the use of material objects as a way of representing a shared aesthetic taste and community membership (Chaney, 2002). This is similar to Filf's discussion in the previous section of a perceived synergy of values between him and the community to which he belongs. Nail's use of a material object in this way is a non-verbal method through which this belonging may be recognised by others (Tilley, 2006). Both Nail and the girl are wearing their T-shirts to advertise membership to the Metaller community. When they notice the other person presenting the same identity through a similar T-shirt they feel connected. In other words, both Nail and the girl walking past are wearing Heavy Metal T-shirts as a way of representing a shared aesthetic taste and community membership that, when acknowledged by another, results in a feeling of belonging. While Nail discusses this interaction as a result of mutual respect or a feeling of understanding, these feelings stem from the communication of a shared Metaller identity. "Understanding each other" in this sense refers to the mutual acknowledgement of a shared Metaller identity.

The expression of identity is not limited to one object. Combinations of material objects can also be used to represent the cumulative nature of the self at a given point in time (Noble, 2004). For example, Figure 2 is a photograph provided by Miss Raven depicting her, a friend, and a collection of material objects. Taken in 1995, the background of the photograph consists of a red and black velvet dress, a *Sepultura* T-shirt, and several alcohol bottles (to the left of the picture). Both Miss Raven and her friend are holding cans of beer. As Miss Raven explains, the collection of objects depicted represent a snapshot of her life at 14 years of age:

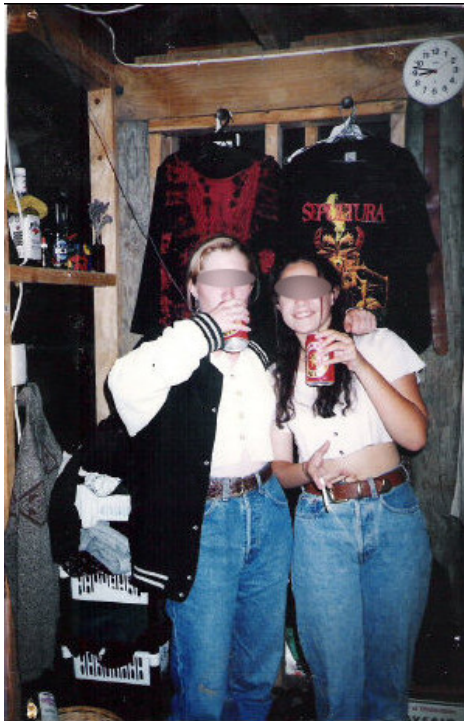


Figure 2. Miss Raven (on the right) and friend, circa 1995

Miss Raven: Yeah cos that was my whole drinking time, the first time I started drinking and going to parties and stuff. We were listening to *Rage*, *Metallica*, bit of *Pink Floyd*, *Pantera*, *Sepultura*, all of that and everyone had the T-shirts and we all drank Lion Red. Stereotype anyone? [laughs] Check shirts, long hair and didn't wash it, almost grunge, almost grunge; but we were keeping it real [laughs]. Doc boots, but that's what we grew up on and it sticks with you ... black T-shirt, tie dyed velvet, Lion Red. Yeah! Hard! 14!

Miss Raven has chosen this photograph to show a particular time in her life when she began listening to predominantly Heavy Metal music. The photograph also shows a collection of objects that represent this stage of her life. Material objects may be used as a way of evoking memories of past events (*cf.* Radley, 1990). The photograph serves as a reminder of that particular time, with the depicted collection of objects and associated music eliciting nostalgic memories. Remembering is something that can occur through the objects people own and with which they interact, and as a result can play a key role in the history of individuals and groups (Radley, 1990). Material objects can be used to establish links to the past and present and to sustain and remind people of their identities (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Personal and social identities involve a relationship to the past where events that have happened in another time and place affect the present. In using the photograph as a focal point for discussion, Miss Raven is re-opening a particular space of experience (Garlick, 2002). The importance of remembering ensures that material objects can play a significant role in the production, performance, and articulation of identity (Garlick, 2002).

The relationship between material objects, memory, and identity can be extended through the concept of souvenirs. Souvenirs are objects that are collected and accumulated in order to present identity and community to others (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005). Figure 3 depicts Filf's ticket from the Wacken Heavy Metal festival he attended in Germany. The Wacken Open Air festival is one of the most popular European Heavy Metal music festivals. It takes place annually in the small town of Wacken, Germany, and caters to a wide range of Heavy Metal sub-genres (<http://www.wacken.com>).



Figure 3. Filf's Wacken ticket

Souvenirs such as Filf's Wacken ticket link identity, objects, and places together through locating their owners at important events (Cullam-Swan & Manning, 1994; Morgan & Pritchard, 2005). These objects are an important part of peoples' lives as they present a storied identity (Giddens 1991; Stewart, 1993). They are a way of not only collecting objects, but creating meaning for these collections (*cf.* Hurdley, 2006). As Stewart (1993) states: "because of its connections to biography and its place in constituting the notion of the individual life, the memento becomes emblematic of the worth of that life and of the self's capacity to generate worthiness" (p. 139). The concept of worthiness links souvenirs to status. Souvenirs such as ticket stubs and concert T-shirts are often used not only as commemorations of events but also as forms of sub-cultural capital (Thornton, 1995). Objects brought back from events are not limited to advertisements of community membership; they are also used within communities in relation to status. The Wacken ticket is admired by other Metallers and confers status on Filf as proof of his attendance. The effort and money required to travel to Germany to attend Wacken presents Filf as a knowledgeable and active community member. His experience and his souvenir of the event illustrates how the meanings attributed to material objects are a complex network of inter-related factors, including the dedication that can be represented (Miller, 1987).

This construction of meaning for material objects credits the owners of these collections with a sense of agency (*cf.* Hills, 2002). A criticism of research concerning identity expression and material objects is that consumers are “cultural dupes” manipulated by market forces. Commercial producers motivated by profit are described as exploiting community members’ drive for individuality and distinction (Frank & Weiland, 1997). Such perspectives do not reflect the sense of agency that community members often develop through the active appropriation of objects. Further literature (e.g., Renshaw, 2006) has discussed how commodities created by commercial interests can be strategically consumed to present unique formations of self. Individuals and communities often actively work within social structures such as capitalism (DeCerteau, 1984). Material objects can be converted or adapted in creative ways through a process of appropriation, allowing personalisation of texts and associated commodities as specific representations of personal and social identities. This is a more active process than mere consumption. Moreover, appropriations may involve considerable creative and symbolic work as consumers alter, decorate or re-categorise purchased material objects (Thompson, 1995).

Recognising the process of making meaning in relation to material objects acknowledges that daily existence also incorporates elements of creativity (DeCerteau, 1984). Rather than a dichotomy of either complete lack of agency or total creative freedom, working within societal structures means that consumers of commodities are subject to market forces but still have agency. For example, people can purchase goods and decorate and personalise them. Figure 4 is a photograph depicting the two home drawn logos that adorn Architect’s old school bag.



Figure 4. Architect's old school bag

Architect: When I was at school, like 15 or 16, wearing *Black Sabbath* and *Iron Maiden* T-shirts and had this ... old army style bag and had a *Slayer* symbol on it cos I was into art and *Black Sabbath* underneath that and that was just totally out there.

This old army bag has been appropriated through using it for purposes other than those originally intended (Renshaw, 2006). The appropriation of the bag has been expressed by decoration. Through these processes of appropriation, Architect's bag becomes not only a functional item for carrying things, but also a creative outlet in the expression of identity and community. The bag is useful in the everyday presentation of identity; it is something that Architect took to school on a daily basis. This also highlights how music listeners are not merely passive dupes. They are active and they can create and appropriate a variety of materials into their everyday life (Campbell, 1995). A bag as a material object is a particularly significant artefact of everyday life as it is a convenient way of carrying other material objects that can also serve to represent identity (Connor, 2002). It is not limited, however, to a simple case of "Bags are full of lives" (Connor, 2002, p. 349). Bags themselves can also express identity through how they are shaped, coloured, or decorated; in Architect's case, by decorating the bag with band logos.

Sub-cultural appropriations of objects and the agency of fans are not only about decorating purchased items. Appropriation extends to the creation of new objects (Campbell, 1995). The headboard Nail created for his bed provides an excellent example of such creation (see Figure 5). Made from recycled native timber, the headboard is shaped like the guitar Nail plays onstage.

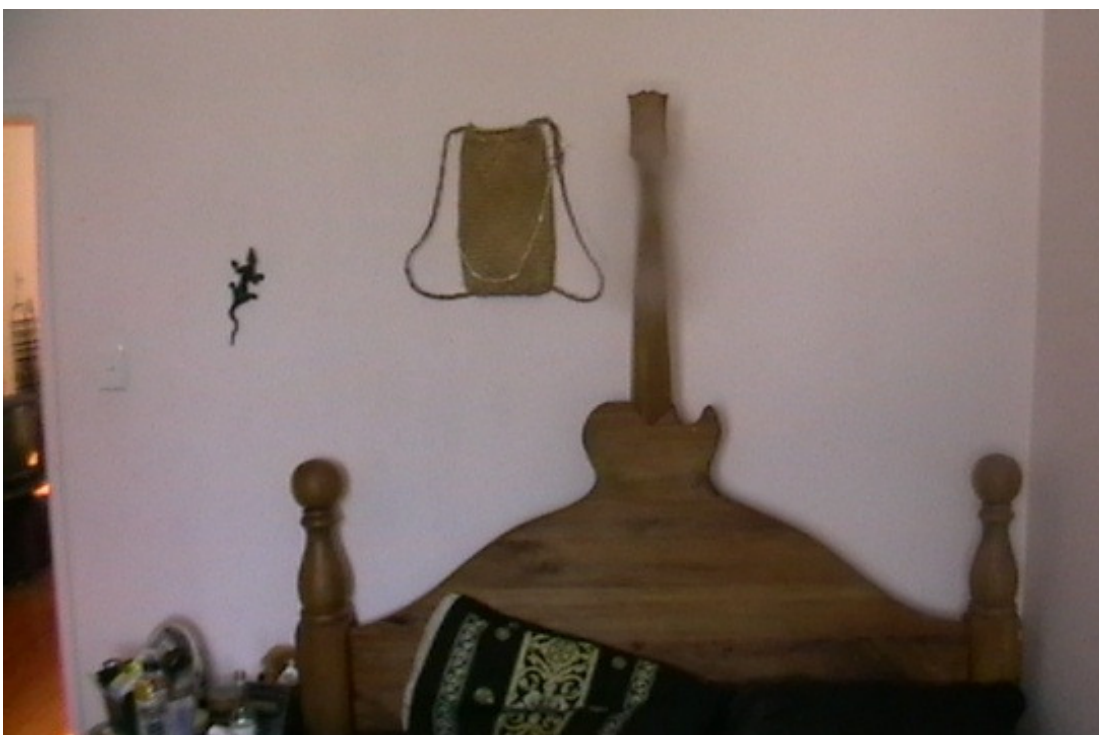


Figure 5. Nail's "Rock Star" bed

Nail. Yeah me and a mate made it actually. It's an old fence, I ripped an old fence down at work and its fucken native so I tidied it up and we made a bed ... two nights we knocked it out.

Nail's Girlfriend. The rock star bed.

N. The guitar bed [laughs].

Dave. That's awesome and the fact that you made that and it's native.

N. Yeah. But that's the guitar I play on stage, the Les Paul, traced around it and used that guitar to model it off (laughs).

The "rock star bed" represents a highly skilled creation of an object. This distinctive form of sub-cultural capital has become taken-for-granted as part of the furniture through routine use. When first questioned about what material objects would be

suitable for me to photograph during our interview, Nail was unsure. After considering it for a while, he decided that we should walk around his apartment and “see what we could find” and so we walked into the main bedroom. His first instinct was to point to the music posters on the wall until he saw my shock reaction to the headboard. Despite the headboard exemplifying a range of issues we had discussed during the interview, Nail had not immediately considered it relevant. Everyday life often contains the extraordinary within the ordinary and vice-versa (Lawrence et al., 2004). Material objects and practices that may seem extraordinary are often taken for granted by those within the cultural group or community (Chaney, 2002). Thus, daily use had infused Nail’s bed with a sense of the everyday and it took my reaction to de-familiarise it and make it seem strange (*cf.* Chaney, 2002).

While Nail’s rock star bed is permanently located in his bedroom, many other material objects that express identity are portable (Connor, 2002). My participants described Heavy Metal T-shirts as a way of displaying identity on the body. Issues of embodiment are examined in more detail in the next section; however, as a way of introducing this concept I examine it here in relation to clothing. Clothing provides a particularly visible example of embodiment through material objects (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). This process has been referred to as stylisation, where combinations of clothing are displayed on the body in order to communicate communal affiliations to others (Chaney, 2002). Stylisation in the form of spiked wristbands, steel-capped boots, and various hairstyles, in combination with Heavy Metal band T-shirts, constitutes a pseudo-uniform for Metallers. Figure 6 is a photograph of Nail playing with his band at a local bar. In the accompanying excerpt Nail links the importance of his Metaller identity with his stylisation.



Figure 6. Nail playing at Rock bar Axces

Nail: [Heavy Metal plays] a huge part, it's pretty much me you know. It affects the clothes I wear, my image on stage, its fucken a huge part of me ... Otherwise I wouldn't be wearing what I wear, like for every fucken gig I wear army shorts, my Gemini shirt ... I always wear the same thing every time.

Here symbolic aspects such as army camouflage shorts and a particular shirt are mentioned. Within the photograph other symbolic aspects are present, such as a Mohawk hairstyle, goatee beard, and a leather wristband. Using these material objects Nail has developed a particular Metaller persona, or stylisation, onstage. This persona is expressed through his appearance and items of clothing, a common strategy within such communities as Heavy Metal (*cf.* Cullam-Swan & Manning, 1994). While in his everyday life he wears other Heavy Metal T-shirts and may not always have his Mohawk up, on stage that is what he is known for amongst other bar patrons. His stylisation on stage emphasises and exaggerates certain symbolic aspects of his culture and the presentation of a specific social identity (*cf.* Chaney, 2002). This is illustrated through the accompanying passage where Nail associates

his Metaller identity with a combination of props. His identity affects the clothes he wears and, by association, the way his identity is communicated to others. In this way attire and bodily presentation – his stylisation is about making his identity tangible to him and to others (*cf.* Garner, 2004).

It is important to note that individual elements of a Metaller stylisation are not exclusive to Metallers. While Nail's Mohawk is also common in Punk culture, in combination with other objects it is recognised as part of a Metaller stylisation. Because of hybridisation and multiple community memberships, there are overlaps in the material objects used across groups (*cf.* Pieterse, 1995). Heavy Metal shares specific material objects with other groups and communities. There are, nevertheless, a range of stylistic options and acceptable combinations of material objects that can still be considered representative of the community. It is the particular accumulations of objects, and their use in identity performance, that distinguishes Metallers from other groups and communities.

In sum, material objects are important in the expression of identity (Cullum-Swan & Manning, 1994). They are a way of extending the self into the external world (Hermans, 2001; James, 1890). This highlights how expressions of identity such as material objects not only involved isolated, individual objects but of collections of objects as well. Identity is a cumulative process that is built upon through interactions with others (Kaufman, 2000), and so collections of objects represent this accumulation (Noble, 2004). Possessions also represent a form of sub-cultural capital that conveys status through the linkage of people, places, times and events (Thornton, 1995). These kinds of material objects have been referred to as souvenirs (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005). A reliance on capitalist structures in supplying objects to be purchased has led to sub-cultural groups such as Metallers being viewed as cultural dupes to be exploited by commercial interests (Frank & Weiland, 1997). This is not the case as consumers of material products often work within such systems to appropriate and create their own expressions of identity (Renshaw 2006; Thompson, 1995). These appropriations become normalised through routine use (Chaney, 2002). Clothing provides a particularly relevant example of all of the processes examined in this chapter. Items of clothing also illustrate the mobile nature of material objects as expressions of identity. Items such as Heavy Metal T-shirts were used by my research participants as a mobile method of identity expression worn on

the body. Combinations of clothing are used as a form of stylisation to embody identity and community (Chaney, 2002; Frith & Gleeson). This concept of embodiment will be further extended in the following section through a discussion of tattoos.

Embodiment through tattoos

While material objects such as clothing are an important part of embodying identity (Frith & Gleeson, 2004) these embodied expressions can easily be altered to suit the context. A more permanent form of embodiment is the representation of identity and community through the physical inscription of identity on to bodies. This is particularly pronounced in tattooing, an established form of body art in many countries (Pitts, 2003). Tattoos can display personal and communal histories, relating specific events and placing wearers at certain events. Tattoos are also able to evoke strong memories in others through feelings of nostalgia. As souvenirs, tattoos link self, memory, and community (*cf.*, Morgan & Pritchard, 2005). In this section I develop an understanding of the embodiment of social identities and communal ties through tattooing. By focusing on the dialectics of tattoos and their metonymic relationship with the Heavy Metal community, I explore how a sense of self as a member of the Heavy Metal community can be imprinted on to Metallers' bodies.

Having a Heavy Metal themed tattoo has come to mark the wearer as a member of the Metaller community (Weinstein, 2000). Such markings often include symbols and images, such as skulls or demons that appear unsavoury to other societal groups. These "anti-social" markings are employed to represent Heavy Metal's association with expressions of rebellion and the darker side of the human condition (*cf.* Weinstein, 2000). Heavy Metal tattoos may also represent relevant bands or musicians and link the wearer to specific concerts and festivals. Figure 7 depicts Drummer's back tattoo, which is his band's logo. Following the image there is an interview extract in which *UTU's* vocalist outlines the reasons behind his skull tattoos, which leads Drummer to briefly comment on the reasons behind his own tattoo.



Figure 7. Drummer's *UTU* tattoo

Vocalist. Cos I like them, cos they're cool [laughs]. Same reason everyone says they have a tattoo cos man that's cool - reason why we get them. Bit of meaning some of them but more of them are just skulls, bit of blood, goes with the music, goes with the mentality [laughs].

Dave. What do you mean by mentality?

V. [Growls].

Drummer. Showing your inner self.

In their brief discussion above, *UTU's* vocalist begins by saying how he decided on his tattoo designs as a matter of aesthetic choice. He then briefly mentions how his skull tattoos represent his membership to a Metaller community. *UTU's* vocalist describes how the skulls are linked to Heavy Metal music, as they are a part of a Metaller identity, referred to by him as the "mentality". Tattoos such as skulls or Drummer's band logo advertise membership to a Metaller community. Drummer's choice of back tattoo, reflecting his membership to the band, is not only an aesthetic choice that "looks cool" but also reflects his identity as a Metaller and *UTU* band member. In this way, the tattooed body extends identity into the material world in the way that social psychologists have described (e.g., Hermans, 2001; James, 1890). Tattoos are at once personal and communal icons of identity and group membership (DeMello, 2000). *UTU's* tattoos are embodied statements of identity and membership to a community. In such ways, tattoos can trace a complex history of participation

and claims to belonging. Tattooing comprises a powerful way of drawing together places, people, and events, and of asserting one's relationship with a community (Te Awekotuku et al., 2007). This supports the assertion that identities are not located purely within heads (Jovechelovitch, 2007). The *UTU* tattoo involves a transformation of Drummer's body, layering it with meanings that express his history and relationship to the band.

Tattoos not only provide a way to represent internal states but can also provide a way of imprinting the external world onto the self (Back, 2004). This external environment includes the communities people belong to and the people with whom they share affinities (*cf.* DeMello, 2000). Another prominent example of tattooing amongst my research participants is Chopper. Figures 8-10 depict the tattoos on Chopper's right arm. Accompanying these images is an interview extract in which Chopper describes his tattoos.



Figure 8. Chopper's upper right arm



Figure 9. Chopper's lower right arm



Figure 10. Chopper's lower inside right arm

Chopper: Starts at the top [Figure 8], with the portrait of *Darrell Abbott* the guitarist from *Pantera* murdered on the 8th of December 2004 on stage performing to a packed house. The lightning bolts around him are a reference to his most famous guitar design, the Dimebolt. Around the front there's three more crosses ... that represent the other three people who were shot on that night, round the back is the CFH that is the Cowboys from Hell logo that was their first commercially successful album. The music underneath is the bass line from a song from *The Black Label Society* called 'In this River' and it's also the lyrics as well underneath from that song. It's also the song that *The Black Label Society* dedicated to *Darrell* after the event and the crowd underneath is just your standard concert mosh pit paying homage to their hero as he floats away. Down the back [Figure 9] is a portrait of *Zakk Wylde* who is both the author and composer of the lyrics and music up the top, which has been signed and autographed [by *Wylde*] and tattooed [by a tattoo artist] when I met [Wylde] a couple of years ago. Come round this side [Figure 10], the next portrait of *Vinnie Paul* who is not only *Darrell's* brother but is also the drummer for both *Pantera* and *Damageplan* and was obviously there on the night that he got shot, that has also been signed by him and tattooed. [My right arm is] basically one big ongoing tribute to the memory of *Darrell Abbott*.

In his description of the tattoos, Chopper mentions several features that all relate to the guitarist *Darrell "Dimebag" Abbott*. *Dimebag* was the guitarist for several Heavy Metal bands including *Pantera*, *Damageplan*, and *Rebel meets Rebel*. He was murdered while performing on-stage with *Damageplan* on 8 December 2004. That external set of events has led to Chopper shaping and altering his body. He has inscribed his skin to reflect past events, imprinted as a form of visual history to be communicated to others (Foucault, 1977). The tattoos, in one sense, are monuments to Chopper's identity and membership to the Heavy Metal community (*cf.* Favro, 2006). These monuments include events such as *Dimebag's* death, as well as concerts where Chopper met with high profile band members. Such tattoos, and in particular the portrait tattoos, serve as exemplars for a larger community with its own affiliations to people, material objects, events and places (*cf.* Mirzoeff, 1995). When

discussing his tattoos, Chopper takes the viewer on a tour of his bodyscape and, in doing so, takes them with him through time and space. His tour is not only of his body but also of his cultural place in the world and the events and experiences that are central to his social identity as a Metaller.

Identities are not only evident in displays but also made through social interactions (Jovchelovitch, 2007). If a shared social identity bonding people in a community consists of similarities in symbolism and art (cf. McMillan & Chavis, 1986), then feelings of community and belonging can be experienced through sharing such art with others.



Figure 11. *Harvest* members' "Cowboys from Hell" tattoos

Figure 11 depicts three members of the Rotorua band *Harvest* displaying tattoos that are similar to Chopper's. Of particular note is the CFH logo prominent on the upper arms of all three band members. Chopper also has this design as part of his right arm tattoos (see Figure 8). While at a Heavy Metal bar, Chopper and I initiated a conversation with *Harvest* about *Pantera*. During this conversation Chopper turned to me and asked, "Should I?", and then handed me his jacket and rolled up his sleeves to show the band members his tattoos. Each member of *Harvest* then rolled

up their sleeves to show their own tattoos. Chopper then mentioned that a door man at the bar also had a *Dimebag* portrait tattoo. The door man was brought over and a large *Pantera* discussion and sharing of tattoos ensued. Each tattooed Metaller told their own story regarding their relationship to the band and its music.

In this instance, a community discussion, initiated by Chopper, was conducted in the middle of the bar, with tattoos providing focus for engagement. Having an affinity for a particular band and its associated image, and then sharing this affinity with others and discovering they think similarly, elicits feelings of belonging and relationships between their bodies and community (*cf.* Bradley, 2000). In such ways, tattoos function as visual, material, and embodied substitutes for the larger whole (*cf.*, Favro, 2006). When community members who possess similar tattoos display them to each other, there is recognition of affinity. In this case, Chopper's tattoos function as focal points for connections with other Metallers such as *Harvest*. Through interactions with other people and their own tattoos, Chopper's tattoos have not only represented but also strengthened his links to the Metaller community. His bodyscape has been shaped as a source of community engagement and belonging. It has come to metonymically represent Heavy Metal not only through the tattoos themselves but also through reactions to his bodyscape from others. These reactions reify and confirm his community membership and in doing so are sources for a sense of belonging. Chopper's tattoos comprise physical objects with which there may be interaction, directly or indirectly, and thus are not limited to the symbolic. The tattoos can not only be seen but can also be physically touched or felt by him or observers. In this way, tattoos are a way of creating and articulating attachments between the body, the self, and community (Bradley, 2000).

In sum, in this section I have illustrated the use of tattoos in the communication of identity and community (DeMello, 2000). These embodied expressions are not limited to external representations of internal phenomena, as they are also a way of picturing the external world on the skin (Back, 2004). Tattoos can constitute monuments that represent various stages of identity which can then be shared with others (*cf.* Favro, 2007). In sharing tattoos with other community members, tattooed people strengthen communal bonds (*cf.* Bradley, 2000). These circumstances highlight the interactional nature of tattoos and embodied expressions of identity and community (*cf.* Jovchelovitch, 2007). The body is shaped and decorated to reflect

interactions with people, places, objects, and events (Back, 2004; Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Pitts, 2003).

Valuing bodies and distinctions

Identities are not only performed and developed through interactions with other community members, but also via interactions with those who are perceived as different (Jovchelovitch, 2007). In social science research, this has been explained through a discussion of othering or boundaries. Such research relies on the belief that geographical communities establish physical boundaries so a group is able to define when and where it can exist (*cf.* McMillan, 1996). This phenomenon has been conceptualised as a way for a group to distinguish itself from other groups (Sibley, 1995). Contemporary research has extended such boundary-creation to psychological boundaries, where those who do not fit are made to feel unwelcome through both physical practices and symbolic displays (*cf.* Hodkinson, 2007; Paechter, 2003). Such extensions acknowledge the presence of demarcations and differentiation in online contexts (Hodkinson, 2007). This section describes the establishment of community boundaries by my participants as a way to maintain their collective distinctiveness and convey value on their group membership. Despite the concept of boundaries, the opportunity remains to negotiate such demarcations via the ability to perform various aspects of self, which has prompted my re-conceptualisation of boundaries as thresholds. The concepts of embodiment and stylisation provide opportunities to navigate across thresholds through altering the body's presentation of self.

Notions of thresholds have become increasingly prevalent in conceptualisations of border communities. Border communities are “places where community members are seen as different (and deficient) to mainstream society” (Drevdahl, 2002, p.11). My research participants viewed Heavy Metal as a border community because of a perceived lack of support from the music industry for New Zealand Heavy Metal bands. Participants also made reference to the way in which they thought wider society viewed them as Metallers: violent, unintelligent drug abusers. Some also recounted experiences where they felt they had been discriminated against because

of their Metaller identity. Figure 12 depicts a favourite *Cannibal Corpse* shirt belonging to H.O.B. In the accompanying interview extract, H.O.B discussed a recent experience where she attempted to rent a flat.



Figure 12. H.O.B's *Cannibal Corpse* T-shirt

H.O.B. There's a sort of negative thing attached to being a Metaller like when I was in Lower Hutt last time I was trying to find a flat and I went to this real estate agent and I was wearing a *Cannibal Corpse* T-shirt [see Figure 12] and the guy sort of looked at me weirdly and asked how old I was and I said I was 18 which I was then and I think he said he'd ring me back the next day so I could get the key to look at the place and he never rang me back and I tried ringing him quite a lot of times and he was never there or never bothered to ring me and I think that was partly to do with wearing a Metal shirt and people who don't listen to Metal thinking 'Oh drunk, druggy that's gonna fuck up the flat' and stuff and my friend was once looking for a flat and he was wearing a Metal shirt of some kind and the landlord said some remark about 'Oh hope you're not going to take drugs and ruin the place' and that's

insulting cos there's obviously some who would do that but that's not exclusive to Metal, there's dumb asses everywhere.

In the passage above, H.O.B. associated these experiences at least in part to her Metaller identity and how she chooses to express that through Heavy Metal T-shirts. Tajfel (1978) has discussed the tendency for those with high emotional investment in group membership to interpret social situations as being relevant to that membership. In this instance, as a consequence of H.O.B.'s core sense of self as a Metaller, she has assumed that the real estate agent's negative reaction is largely due to her identity as a Metaller. In this instance, however, there could have been several reasons why the real estate agent did not call back – including issues such as H.O.B.'s relatively young age.

H.O.B. believed the real estate agent's behaviour while she was seeking accommodation was a result of her Metaller membership. This raises issues about inter-group relationships and identity. Social Identity Theory (SIT) identifies various strategies used by group members to distinguish themselves from other communities. One such strategy is to develop a sense of distinctiveness by creating thresholds that separate one's group from another. These thresholds can then be enforced through performances of identity, for example positioning other groups in a particular way or displaying certain symbols that other groups deem offensive (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). In such ways, thresholds can be used by community members to feel that their membership to the group is worthwhile, because they feel that they are part of something that not everyone can join (Adler & Adler, 1995). Such a threshold is identified by Space Ghost:

Well you see the number one artists and they're all the same, the Pop artists, whereas I think a part of Metal is it's a big fuck you to all of that. It's really what part of it is and people associate it with themselves so when they see people like *Justin Timberlake* and *50 Cent* and all of that they wanna distance themselves from all of that, that's the whole point, it's part of the whole Heavy Metal identity.

Here, Space Ghost is comparing and distinguishing his social identity from that of others. Social interactions with outsiders can be utilised in identity development and maintenance (Jovchelovitch, 2007). This is manifested in media-based identities through discussions of cult media. The mainstream is constructed by Metallers as

promoting commercialism at the expense of emotional connection and authenticity (cf. Jancovich, et al., 2003). As listeners of a form of media that not many others enjoy or are familiar with, Metallers feel that they are part of a select few who “get it”. In doing so, they maintain a sense of value in their membership as a fan (Jancovich, 2003). In such ways, thresholds can be a part of social identity (Paechter, 2003).

SIT has further distinguished groups as maintaining a sense of distinctiveness through defining themselves in opposition to non-specific outgroups (Nigbur & Cinnirella, 2007). By constructing a sense of a generalised other, groups develop a sense of solidarity through feeling that they have another group to oppose (Sibley, 1995). Space Ghost’s identification of a Metaller sense of the mainstream is an example of such a generalised group. This group has been constructed by Metallers as an “other” that they can position themselves in opposition to. While there have been attempts to define the mainstream in discussions of other alternative forms of media (e.g., Jancovitch, 2003), these are problematic given those often categorised under mainstream are not a homogenous group. For example, even to the untrained ear there is a significant difference between the music of *Justin Timberlake* and *50 Cent*.²⁶ Thus, the concept of the mainstream is largely a rhetorical construct, a Metaller strategy of positioning to confer value on their membership to the Metaller community (cf. Finell & Liebkind, 2010). A sense of the mainstream provides Metallers with an opposition, a generalised alternative against which they can locate themselves, an alternative they can employ to confer status upon Heavy Metal music, its symbolism, and the Metaller community to which they belong. Being underground and less commercially successful gives a Heavy Metal band greater credibility and status with their audiences. Metallers feel the need to justify their membership to their community, to feel self worth and acceptance – sometimes through the rejection of others (cf. Adler & Adler, 1995).

The implication of this sense of mainstream is that the thresholds most commonly encountered and used by Metallers are psychological thresholds. In her interview, Miss Raven describes the attraction she felt towards becoming part of a Metaller community:

²⁶ For examples of these artists see *Justin Timberlake* at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAnSWtJ9AFk> and *50 Cent* at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qm8PH4xAss>.

I've never fitted into that mainstream Pop type set. If you have to identify with a group it's definitely [Heavy Metal] cos it's a lot more forgiving of downfalls and quite a lot more expressive than some of the other groups. It's not violent, it's not conforming; it's just yourself and whoever you want to be.

Dave. How do you mean forgiving of downfalls?

M. I just find people more accepting instead of looking you up and down and going 'Oh my god' or 'Pffft whatever dick', it's a lot more 'Sweet as mate, have a beer, it's all good'. It's always been like that and I found that at school ... there were a lot of little cliques and a lot of them were the prissy girls ... or rugby heads and they judged you too much ... if you didn't have money they didn't want to know ya, if you didn't have something that they had or that they thought were the bees knees you were just nothing. That's what gravitated me to [Metallers] cos they're like 'Come on in, anytime you're in the area come over'. It's very accepting and not judging, plus I curse like a trooper and I need to be somewhere where they're not gonna go 'Oh she curses all the time', it's the way I express myself. I don't see anything wrong with using the word cunt. I really don't.

In the passage above, Miss Raven discusses how other groups made her feel unwelcome through their disapproval of her actions. Joining the Metaller community meant there were no such problems due to synergies of aesthetic tastes and practices. In the experience she relates above, Miss Raven talks about a distancing between Metallers and a mainstream consisting of "rugby heads" and "prissy girls". She is attempting to distance herself from this group and convey positive value on her membership as a Metaller through her discussion of non-conformity, freedom of expression, and acceptance. She describes the mainstream as a constrictive group that views her behaviour negatively. In doing so, she is maintaining a sense of distinctiveness by separating her identity from the perceived mainstream through an emphasis on their judgements regarding her behaviour and aesthetic tastes (Finell & Liebkind, 2010). She is performing a Metaller identity in opposition to the mainstream, establishing a psychological threshold through rejection or "othering" (*cf.* Sibley, 1995). This is not to say that she did not feel excluded or did not encounter negative reactions to how she acted. As was evident from public discussions about this research project (referred to in the Introduction chapter),

Metallers and Bogans are still viewed and positioned by other groups as uncultured because of their aesthetic preferences. Perhaps the “prissy girls” and “rugby heads” behaviour could also be explained as a form of social distancing to confer status on their own community memberships. Nevertheless, Miss Raven’s example highlights how strategies of positioning are a common process for many groups, both Metaller and non-Metaller, and how this process is manifested in everyday inter-group relationships.

A further implication of Miss Raven’s experience is how the performance of identity through distancing oneself from other groups results in the exclusion of others. As concepts of “us” are developed so too are grand narratives of “them”. These narratives can affect everyday interactions (Drevdahl, 2002). This is illustrated by H.O.B. when asked if being tough is a part of the Heavy Metal image:

Yeah. Yeah I’d definitely say that cos I’m not counting bands that have girls in them cos I hate Metal bands with girls in them.

Dave. Really, why’s that?

H. Well like I used to like *Arch Enemy* and the lead singer is a girl and there’s something about girls when they’re in Metal bands that just doesn’t fit cos like Metal is more like ... it’s not womanly, it’s tough. It’s just manly.

D. Are you able to talk a bit more about that? Is it because you don’t view Metal as feminine?

H. Well like it’s just, I don’t like girls in general cos a majority of them seem kind of fake and they shop at Supré²⁷ and then when it comes to Metal guys they’re tough and they seem genuine and no bullshit and stuff.

Opinions about gender status within Heavy Metal, and attitudes to females as performers and listeners, appear to be diverse and in that way reflect those attitudes in wider society. While an in-depth examination of gender perceptions in Heavy Metal is outside the scope of this research, the example indicates the potential negative impact that issues of thresholds and grand narratives can have in everyday life. H.O.B.’s view of a Metaller identity includes aspects of not only authenticity, but

²⁷ Supré is a teens’ clothing chain in Australia and New Zealand. Its stores supply the latest fashion trends (<http://www.supre.com.au/>).

also masculinity and “tough”-ness. These elements she associates with an aggressive image and sound. Bands that traditionally fit such performances of identity include the Death and Black Metal sub-genres that H.O.B. enjoys. On the other hand a perceived outsider, such as a female non-Metaller, may express an identity consisting of femininity, commerciality, and conformity. Such rejection is somewhat surprising given that H.O.B. is a female participant who vehemently rejects notions of femininity. The establishment of such grand narratives of a Metaller identity means that there is the potential for her to shun interaction with those who she feels fits the profile of a feminine, conformist, Supré shopper. Interestingly, this grand narrative of the mainstream includes not only a reference to a particular identity, but also a particular place - the store Supré. This is not only a geographical location but a place that sells material objects such as designer clothing that are a part of the grand narrative. This becomes “them”, “their place”, and “their stuff”. Material objects can serve as a way of establishing, representing, and enforcing communal thresholds.

Symbols and practices play important roles in the establishment of thresholds through differentiating one’s group from another (Brewer, 1999). Heavy Metal’s imagery often involves aggressive themes, such as iconography associated with death or violence (Walser, 1993). This was reflected amongst those of my participants who chose their own pseudonyms (including Nail, Misery, and Ripper). Past research sometimes viewed this as a corrupting influence that promotes a lack of social responsibility and/or evidence of listeners’ psychological instability (e.g., King, 1985). In contrast, participants in this research discussed Metaller symbolism as a matter of aesthetic choice. Most viewed skulls as aesthetically pleasing or a sign of community membership rather than a public warning that the wearer was not to be trusted or a physical threat. However, many also acknowledged that their performance of identity could also be used in gate-keeping and maintaining a sense of safety. Figure 13 is a photograph that I took at an Auckland bar called Oblivion. It depicts a pentagram²⁸ that is painted on the bar’s floor, a common symbol that is used to metonymically represent the Heavy Metal community due to its links to

²⁸ The pentagram is a five pointed star that is drawn with five straight lines (see Figure 13). This shape has been incorporated into the symbolism of a variety of religious groups. When the pentagram is positioned inside a circle with two points up, sometimes with a goat’s head inside, it is associated with Satanism (Wikipedia, 2011).

Satanism. The pentagram's appropriation by the Metaller community is due to this link, as satanic versions of the pentagram are offensive to other groups. This offensiveness, or "shock value", is used by Metallers to communicate their identity through the exclusion of these other groups.



Figure 13. Pentagram on the floor of Oblivion

In this way, the pentagram is a symbol that is frequently used by Metallers for gate-keeping purposes. This perspective is illustrated by Flash Medallion when asked of the reason behind Metallers' choices of imagery:

I think it's a pretty natural thing really. If you're going for this brutal hard thing it's the first thing you go to really, a skull ... I mean if you're going to be hard, death is in that direction ... At the lowest childish end of the spectrum, I think a skull is cool ... and half the reason for the pentagrams ... [is] to get people to leave [us] alone. People who [we] don't wanna talk to [who have] closed minds ... who quote clichés and dogma and stuff, its kinda like 'Uhhh sure, just leave us alone, don't come near us'. I won't say a test, but kind of like an entry level thing. People who get over this kind of thing are the people we wanna socialise with and who will get it.

Here the symbols of the skull and the pentagram are used to differentiate Metallers from the mainstream. These performances of identity involve taking these unsavoury and confrontational symbols, and using them to metonymically represent Heavy

Metal as a transgressive and socially disruptive social identity (Snell et al., 2011). Skulls and pentagrams are offensive to certain other groups, as they are associated with death and Satanism respectively. Because of these associations, these symbols are distinctive when contrasted with other symbols (*cf.* Bourdieu, 1979). These Metaller performances often come at both the intentional and unintentional exclusion of other groups, depending on the context (Brown, 2007; Vrooman, 2002). Buying a T-shirt bearing a skull symbol (or H.O.B.'s T-shirt depicted in Figure 12), can represent exclusion that is both intentional (as H.O.B.'s shirt was probably designed by the band to evoke controversy) and unintentional through differing performances and interpretations. Performances of identity can become a form of gate-keeping, may be used to encourage interactions with selected others, while excluding those who are unwelcome (Garvey, 2005).

The previous discussions illustrate the complex nature of material objects when investigating their function in threshold maintenance against a constructed mainstream. This aspect of clothing was well-described by Ripper in relation to clothing, when he was asked why he wears Heavy Metal T-shirts:

Sort of to advertise who I am, I guess most people dress in a way that's suitable or portrays their personality somewhat and the way I dress portrays that I like Metal. It's pretty much only Metal-heads that recognise what you're wearing. I mean I don't know what normal people think but I was in Dick Smith²⁹ wearing a Metal shirt the other day and this guy walks past who works there goes 'Oh yeah nice shirt bro' and I was like 'Cheers'.

Dave. How does that make you feel when people say that?

R. It's always good. I don't get it a lot when I wear some of the more underground Metal shirts but when I'm wearing *Metallica* and *Death* and stuff like that, the more mainstream ones, people always say 'Nice shirt' or 'Good stuff'.

In the example above, the Dick Smith employee expressed a shared aesthetic taste that resulted in Ripper feeling a sense of connection with him. Ripper, however, also maintains a sense of distinctiveness as a more informed Metaller through a sense of social categorisation and differentiation facilitated by a material object. He does this

²⁹ Dick Smith is an electronics retail store (see <http://www.dse.co.nz>).

through indicating that there is a certain cultural code or competency required in order to de-cipher or fully understand the meanings behind the object. Bourdieu (1979) described this as a form of symbolic profit whereby the rarer the object and the higher the level of competence required in deciphering its importance, the higher the level of status possessed by the owner. Knowledge of more obscure bands is necessary for a Metaller to develop the sense of mutual understanding described by Nail at the beginning of this chapter's second section when he was acknowledged by a passing *Slipknot* fan. This is also evident in Ripper's account: despite the Dick Smith employee's positive acknowledgement of his T-shirt, Ripper still somewhat dismisses this as an example of limited understanding. The material and the symbolic are being used in everyday interactions in the construction and performance of thresholds. This is symbolic interactionism in action, as it is not only the objects and interactions that are important, but also the meanings that people have for them (Mead, 1934).

The concept of psychological thresholds can be extended to include online interactions. Despite providing a place for users to interact with people from a range of backgrounds and communities, the Internet has psychological thresholds (Hodkinson, 2007). One of the ways this is manifested is through a practice referred to as flaming. This style consists of one person posting a comment intending to offend holders of opposing views and elicit a similar response from them (Vrooman, 2002). The potential for forums to contain derogatory and intentionally contradictory comments is recognised by Death when discussing an Internet forum called NZmetal:

There were some people on there saying *Marilyn Manson* is gay, but others were saying 'Fuck it who cares I'm going to go listen'. I find that on the Internet is where those elitists in particular hang out and do their thing.

Dave. Why is that, because of that anonymity thing?

De. Yeah plus it's probably a sense of power as well; like 'Hey look what I know'. If you were in a pub at a gig and they started going 'blah blah blah' you know 'elitist elitist elitist' and started wanking on you're not going to stand there and listen to them you know? ... I don't think they have a forum to say that kind of thing cos they're not going to show up at a gig that they think is shit ... This is the

only forum that they've really got ... So it probably is anonymity plus the opportunity to actually do it.

Online forums tend to be interest-based places for communing (other examples include sharing experiences of disability, for example), with people registering in order to discuss self-selected topics. NZmetal.com is one such forum. Recognised and used by a range of Metallers (at time of writing there were 403 people officially registered on the site), NZmetal describes itself as the "New Zealand Metal forum" (<http://forum.nzmetal.com/>). This forum has a reputation amongst the Metaller community as a place where performances of genre and related identities are used to categorise other users. Within this place, discussions and judgements concerning Heavy Metal music and a Metaller identity are fiercely contested.

In his discussion, Death acknowledges NZmetal as a place where contributors may perform a particularly exclusionary identity through debates about Heavy Metal bands. Death recognises that such performances could be connected to the anonymity the Internet can provide. Predominantly, however, he attributes the frequency of such elitist expressions to the ease of access for those who wish to express contradictory or controversial views. Thus, there are ways in which people can be made to feel unwelcome online through the enactment of social identities. Users perform this type of identity in order to portray themselves as knowledgeable and influential within an online context (Zhao et al., 2008). Metallers on NZMetal choose to position themselves as experts in order to gain status, prove community membership, and maintain distinctiveness in a similar way to offline practices such as Ripper's previous discussion of his T-shirt (*cf.* Zhao et al., 2008). Those who do not have sufficient knowledge or have a particular opinion, such as liking the commercially successful band *Marilyn Manson*, are often ridiculed and made to feel unwelcome.

Forums such as NZMetal are therefore another place where psychological thresholds are manifested, and people will not necessarily remove all social thresholds when online. This is particularly the case when such thresholds serve important identity functions in relation to in-groups and out-groups (Postmes et al., 1998). The practice of flaming presents an example of the performative scope of community thresholds (*cf.* Garvey, 2005). Posting an insulting comment regarding another user's opinion contributes to a feeling of distinction and at the same time can

serve as an invitation to others who agree with your sentiment to become involved or otherwise communicate. Death describes websites such as NZMetal as an appropriate place for this to occur, in contrast to concerts where it is less likely that others who are present would agree with a contradictory position. Online sites are easier to access and do not necessitate the financial waste which would be required in concert attendance. While owning a computer and maintaining an Internet account do require a significant financial burden, such online resources can be used for other endeavours and so do not represent the financial waste that paying for a concert simply to abuse others would entail.

The discussion of thresholds is further complicated given that geographical, social and cultural spaces are becoming increasingly hybrid and shared by different groups (Hallam & Street, 2000). As social beings, people do not belong to just one group (*cf.* Denzin, 1969). Identities are not fixed, but consist of a range of different context related social positions involving a range of variables and interests (Jenkins, 2004; Paechter, 2003). Heavy Metal is just one of the social identities that made up participants' sense of self. In the comment below, Death discusses his Metaller identity (referred to as Bogan) in relation to his work:

I go to work to work but I'm still a Bogan at work. I mean if someone comes up to me and starts talking about *Slayer*, fuck yeah you know. I'm driving to work I don't suddenly switch to Newstalk ZB³⁰ cos I'm going to work; at the moment I'm listening to *Death* you know, cos I bought the CD today.

Dave. What you were saying about how you don't stop being Bogan, even though you dress differently and are at work and in a different situation?

De. A lot of the time I've got it under my work shirt, black shirt on, but no, still Bogan.

People perform different identities across different environments (Paechter, 2003). Death is a Heavy Metal fan but also a sales and lending specialist at a bank. While he is at work, he is still a Metaller, but that particular identity is de-emphasised and he represents himself as a bank employee. In this way, there are different sets of practices and expectations regarding appearance. The performance of a Metaller

³⁰ Newstalk ZB is a national talkback radio station (see <http://www.newstalkzb.co.nz>).

identity at work for him still involves wearing a Heavy Metal T-shirt under his work clothes. Within the bank setting, if someone were to start talking about the band *Slayer*, then his Metaller identity would be re-emphasised.

Death's comments above also illustrate the negotiation of multiple community memberships. A consequence of multiple community memberships and identities is that people do not experience each in isolation but move through an inter-related network. This network can result in different stylistic and behavioural demands on the individual, as community stylisations, aesthetic tastes, and practices frequently differ (*cf.* Bess et al., 2002). However, physical and symbolic spaces can overlap (Silverstone, 1999). Music, for example, can be a way of bringing a familiar symbolic Metaller environment into the physical work place. The ability to be in multiple spaces at once through music was discussed by research participants. For example, Architect described how he listens to music at his work:

The funny thing about it is that all our work that I design is designed while listening to [Heavy Metal music]. So you tell some clients that their house or building was designed while listening to *Slayer* they think you're taking the piss³¹ a bit and you're like 'Nah I'm serious'. I went to a site visit before and *Pantera's* 'Cowboys from Hell' came on and prior to that I had *Metallica's* 'Orion' on my iPod. I get into a relaxed rhythm where I'm enjoying the music and enjoying what it does. In that way you can forget about everything and just design and it flows through.

Dave. So the music is something you take with you?

A. Oh yeah definitely. Like I'll go out to the beach and I'll take my iPod and some of my work with me and I'll listen to that and draw.

Through the music Architect listens to, he is able to occupy multiple spaces at once - he is physically at the beach but he is also in a "design space" and wherever the music "takes him". This is more than just escapism, as escapism seems to suggest that he has transcended one space to another and while doing so has no control over the previously occupied space. In contrast, Architect's occupation of multiple spaces embraces room to work while symbolically being wherever it is that the music

³¹ "Taking the piss" in this context means to make a joke.

takes him. He is in control of both spaces he occupies at any given time, and that suggests something beyond mere escapism.

Architect's and Death's experiences accommodate Silverstone's (1999) discussion of a double articulation of space, where symbolic spaces are folded into existing ones. In their discussion of a homeless man's experiences of the street while listening to a portable music player, Hodgetts and colleagues (2010b) describe how listening to music can be a form of social participation that does not necessarily involve escapism. Even when the homeless man uses the music to block out other people or noises, there is still a form of social participation. The music is a way of altering his experiences of the city - through listening to music he "smooths his transitions between spaces ... in the process [he] creates a personal vantage point from which to construct his life on the move" (p. 291). Similarly, Architect not only occupies a physical space while working, but has created a symbolic design space through listening to Heavy Metal music. Architect listens to music as a way of weaving physical and symbolic spaces together, creating a personal vantage point within which he designs houses. He is not merely escaping the pressures of work and everyday life, but is actively recreating a familiar Metaller space for himself through the use of music. This is achieved through the use of a material object, in this case an iPod. The use of such portable music devices enables this weaving together of identity, people, and place (Thibaud, 2003). Portable music devices are a way for listeners to take a familiar environment with them in their everyday lives (Bull, 2000).

Items of clothing are another form of material object that can be used to negotiate and navigate across multiple spaces, identities, and memberships. The process is exemplified by Death and his *Megadeth Peace Sells* (Megadeth, 1986) T-shirt (see Figure 14). Death's wearing of this T-shirt on a casual work day was the focus for a formal complaint made by a colleague at the bank where they both work:



Figure 14. Photograph of Death's *Megadeth* T-shirt

Death: I had a meeting and they started talking about the T-shirts I wore to work and how somebody had found offence to them. The operations manager said 'Look people find your T-shirts offensive' and all that sort of thing. They used the *Megadeth* Peace Sells one as an example; they said that someone had thought it was evil. So I explained the T-shirt to them, first of all *Dave Mustaine* [lead singer of *Megadeth*] being Christian so he's not of any satanic leanings or anything ... Second thing was Peace Sells has got airplanes flying across and its basically anti-war. I had to explain basically everything that I was about. They didn't even know that I played music so explained all that and then I had a good conversation with [operations manager] and she said that she recognised Bogan as a culture and Bogan as my cultural choice. It was the way I chose to live my life and I wasn't doing anything illegal, not doing anything harmful, and to show it they had a Bogan day and I had to bring in flags and Metal shirts and I had people come up to me and talking to me about it.

Death's description of the Bogan day is an illustration of the dialogical self and the social negotiation of seemingly contradictory multiple community memberships (*cf.* Hermans, 2001). Death's membership to a Metaller community seemingly contradicts his employment as a bank worker. Each position also results in a contradictory set of material representations, in this case a Heavy Metal T-shirt and a business suit (*cf.* Hermans, 2001). Death has chosen to display the T-shirt in his role as an employee which is initially problematic in his work place because of a formal complaint. Death now has to negotiate these opposing identities with his operations manager through discussing his *Megadeth* T-shirt. The two seemingly contradictory identities are in a dialectic relationship with one another, highlighting their fluid and dynamic nature in this instance (*cf.* Davis, 2006).

Once the symbolic display on his T-shirt was interpreted for his employer, they became more open to the idea of Death wearing such T-shirts. The bank then held a Bogan day at his work. The bank's motives for this were probably an attempt to circulate Death's explanation of his T-shirt to other employees, in order to address their concerns. The display of material objects, including flags and T-shirts, provided a synthesis of spaces. These material objects brought together two different aspects of Death's sense of self. By navigating and negotiating this inter-related network, spaces are woven together as people move across them. In Death's case, there is a form of negotiation where he and the operations manager discussed terms and conditions. Some research within community psychology has suggested the need for individuals to negotiate with potential groups prior to joining, in order to determine whether they would be able to join. If the sacrifice was too great, then membership would be denied or refused (McMillan, 1996). Death's experiences in relation to the pluralistic nature of identity and community makes this process more complex. Death is still a Metaller at work and as a result of the negotiation has not had to sacrifice anything. This indicates that the negotiation and transcendence of thresholds is a fluid process that occurs frequently in everyday life.

In sum, thresholds are a way for people to convey the value that they place upon their community memberships (Adler & Adler, 1995). Through creating a sense of distance from a generalised other, my research participants felt that their membership to a Metaller community was thoroughly worthwhile (*cf.* Nigbur & Cinnirella, 2007). However, this comes at the expense of membership to other

groups as Metallers are made to feel unwelcome in certain contexts. Similarly, Metallers can make other people feel uncomfortable in their environments. Being made to feel unwelcome or uncomfortable represents a form of psychological threshold that can be represented and enforced through both verbal and non-verbal means (Hodkinson, 2007; Sibley, 1995). This process can occur in both online and offline contexts (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Vrooman, 2002). Material objects such as Heavy Metal T-shirts displaying symbolism including skulls are a way of communicating membership in opposition to other groups (Brown, 2007; Walser, 1993). An implication is that by altering their appearance people can transcend these thresholds. Given the possibility that multiple community memberships can result in seemingly contradictory identities (Hermans, 2001), this can require a form of balancing act in which thresholds and symbolism can be negotiated through interactions between groups (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986).

Chapter discussion

In this chapter I have developed an account of identity and community in everyday life in relation to the body. Peoples' identities are developed cumulatively; their sense of self has a sense of consistency over time but also elements of change as this core is built upon via experiences with other people (Hermans, 2001; James, 1890; Noble, 2004). Such a situation was evident in the first section of this chapter, in Chopper's autobiographical account of his Metaller identity over a period of twenty seven years. His Metaller identity developed as his circumstances changed through momentous events such as marriage but also through his routine experience of gradually learning to play bass guitar. While he still felt that he had maintained a Metaller identity over the period, his sense of self developed interactionally as he engaged with other people (*cf.* Kaufman, 2000). His example illustrates the flexibility of identity performance as people use various strategies in order to adapt to their changing environments (*cf.* Hermans, 2001). Through interacting and repositioning their community memberships, my participants' accounts reveal an element of flexibility in their everyday experiences. They develop their identities through their

relationships with other people, ranging from large group memberships to intimate partnerships.

A significant point that has emerged from this chapter is that the processes of identity and community are intimately linked. People extend their identities into communal life (Kroger, 1996), but at the same time draw upon these memberships in the construction of their own sense of self (Hodgetts et al., 2010a). The process continues back and forth throughout peoples' lives as experiences build upon each other in the development of the self (*cf.* Noble, 2004). Engaging with media brings people together so that they can interact and in the process develop identity (Arnow, 1994; Brooker, 2002). Through sharing aesthetic tastes and interests with others, people are drawn together to establish personal relationships and community affiliations (Marti, 2009). People want to feel that their memberships are positive and worthwhile, and so they often emphasise similarities between their personal sense of self and the perceived values they hold for their community (Tajfel, 1981). In doing so, they feel that their membership is worthwhile and in the process experience feelings of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Tajfel, 1981).

These connections to communities are represented tangibly via material objects (Garner, 2004), including, for Metallers, music memorabilia. Material objects can manifest identities and community affiliations (*cf.* Cullum-Swan & Manning, 1994; Garner, 2004). Objects are a way of reminding their owners and other people of community affiliations (Hurdley, 2006), and they provide further opportunities to experience community with others (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Possessions, such as items of clothing, are used to advertise membership to other community members in order to encourage interactions (Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). If identity is developed through interactions with others, then material objects can also provide a basis for this to occur. In recognising a familiar object possessed by someone else, the viewer may experience a sense of connection (Cullum-Swan & Manning, 1994; Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Nail and a passing Metaller felt a mutual connection that occurred because they were both wearing Heavy Metal T-shirts. Through a brief exchange involving a material object, they felt a sense of a shared identity and recognised their dual membership to a wider community of Metallers.

As connections and interactions develop and build upon each other, people collect objects that represent this cumulative nature of the self (Noble, 2004). Collections of objects represent a person's self at a given point in time. Material objects also evoke notions of time and place (*cf.* Radley, 1990). They are physical manifestations of interactions and experiences that occur in places. This has been discussed via the concept of souvenirs (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005). Souvenirs serve as mementos of events, ways of physically connecting people, place, and time. They are a way of reminding the owner of these places and times, and to communicate these links to others (Hurdley, 2006; Morgan & Pritchard, 2005).

Further, rare souvenirs are also used in positioning for status reasons and have been termed sub-cultural capital whereby objects are used to denote community membership. Objects that are more difficult to obtain constitute a higher level of sub-cultural capital (Thornton, 1995). The implication of this is that material objects are not simply gathered and displayed; this process of identity expression via material objects is more complex than discussions of mere consumption (e.g., Frank & Weiland, 1997). The objects people own are also adapted as meanings are developed and altered (Hurdley, 2006). If people are flexible and have the ability to reposition their identity (Hermans, 2001; Kaufman, 2000), then the meanings held for representational objects can also be adapted to suit the context (Hurdley, 2006). For example, people personalise items through decoration or use them for purposes that they were not intended for (Connor, 2002; Renshaw, 2006). Architect decorated his bag to alter the object, communicate his Metaller identity, and to personalise the item. In doing so, the meaning for the object changes from *a* bag to *his* bag. It is a way of infusing the bag with his identity.

Fans of media such as music may also create new objects as another way of turning their fandom or community membership into active engagement (Hills, 2002). Created objects often entail a high level of creative skill. This is a further way of imparting identity to objects. By decorating his bag, Architect is drawing upon his skills as an artist. In making the rock star bed, Nail is utilising his skills as a tradesman. These created objects also convey roles or group memberships. In describing his bed, Nail is presenting himself as a working class guy through his narrative of finding a piece of timber while working. Because of the high level of skill required to create these objects, they are extraordinary, and often provoke the

admiring reaction I expressed when seeing Nail's bed for the first time. Through their routine use, however, such objects can become familiar and taken for granted. They become extraordinary again through interactions with others or when they are contrasted with someone else's experiences (Chaney, 2002). Objects, much like identity, can also be repositioned in relation to other people while maintaining a sense of consistency over time (Noble, 2004). Nail's bed is a consistent part of his daily routine, but its meaning can alter temporarily in the presence of others, only to return again to the background of Nail's life.

Material objects may also be transportable. In this chapter I have drawn upon notions of stylisation and embodiment to examine my participants' use of clothing. Stylisation represents an overall image, or sense of self, that the wearer is trying to communicate to others (Chaney, 2002). This image is then taken out into everyday life as a mobile reference point for interactions (*cf.* Hanson, 2007). Items of clothing such as T-shirts communicate identity to others through the embodiment of identity and community affiliations (Frith & Gleeson, 2004). My research participants wore Heavy Metal T-shirts, often in combination with accessories such as wristbands or particular hair styles, to create a Metaller stylisation and thus advertise their community membership to others. They exaggerated symbolic aspects of the Heavy Metal community on their bodies to present a social identity (*cf.* Chaney, 2002), for example Nail's T-shirt, camouflage shorts, and large Mohawk representing his stage persona.

Embodiment can also include more permanent modifications of the body such as tattoos. Tattoos are an embodiment that entails the carving of identity and community into the skin. Tattoos represent a complex combination of the external and the internal. They are a way of picturing personal and social identities on the wearer as a form of visual history (*cf.* Foucault, 1977). This combination of external and internal represents a more complex process than the skin as a boundary between two different realms. Instead the body is a site for social interaction and functions as an embodied representation of personal and social identities.

[The body is a] surface to be mapped, a surface for inscription, as a boundary between the individual subject and that which is Other to it, as the container of individual identity, but also as a permeable

boundary which leaks and bleeds and is penetrable (McDowell & Sharp, 1997, p. 3).

While McDowell and Sharp (1997) use words like “boundary” and “container”, they also acknowledge that the body is permeable. The body is more than a container for the mind but is also an integrated part of peoples’ identities. In a similar way to discussions about clothing, embodied expressions of identity such as tattoos are a means for people to take identity and community with them in their everyday lives in order to encourage further interactions (Pitts, 2003; Snell et al., 2011; Te Awekotuku, 2007). For example, Chopper’s tattoos are not limited to visual representations of his personal identity, but are an inscription of events on his body that he uses to encourage comment from and discussion with others. The tattoos represent a form of visual monument that is portable as Chopper takes his tattoos out into the world to facilitate interactions with others (*cf.* Favro, 2006; Snell et al., 2011). These interactions contribute to the development of self examined in the first section of this chapter. Chopper is able to articulate an identity that he shares with other Metallers, and when this is acknowledged by people such as members of *Harvest*, he experiences feelings of belonging through connecting with his community.

Performing and experiencing community occurs not only through similarity but also through difference (Jovchelovitch, 2007). As explained in the final section of this chapter, people may also emphasise difference in order to establish themselves as community members and communicate this to others (Adler & Adler, 1995; Sibley, 1995). Metallers emphasise a sense of difference through the establishment of a generalised mainstream. The mainstream is constructed and perceived as a homogeneous group that is a combination of commerciality and fashion (*cf.* Jancovich et al., 2003). Metallers’ grand narratives about the mainstream are set in opposition to their own sense of creative freedom and authenticity. They position themselves in this way to create a sense of difference and distinction and to impart value to their Metaller identity (*cf.* Adler & Adler, 1995; *cf.* Nigbur & Cinnirella, 2007). While Heavy Metal is a form of music that receives relatively less commercial exposure, through television advertising or radio airplay, than other musical forms (Walser, 1993; Weinstein, 2000), it is still set within capitalist structures. Heavy Metal musicians need to sell records in order to earn a living. To do this, they use different methods than television advertising. If Heavy Metal bands did utilise such forms of advertising, some fans would instantly dismiss them as no longer being

representative of the Heavy Metal community, and such bands would be accused of conforming to commercial pressures. Examples of this are evident in Death's discussion of fans' responses to *Marilyn Manson* on Internet forums. Bands such as *Marilyn Manson* are often positioned by some Heavy Metal fans as "sell outs" and no longer a part of a Heavy Metal community that is more concerned with artistic expression than financial gain. Metallers position their music as more authentic than mainstream music, and in turn bestow worth on their associated identity in opposition to more popular forms of musical expression.

A grand narrative of the mainstream as a generalised other that is an imagined amalgam of commerciality, conformity, and prudishness that is "out there somewhere" (Jancovich et al., 2003) is not as destructive as other grand narratives, for example, concerning ethnicity (e.g., Dixon & Durrheim, 2000), and so can be a relatively harmless form of identity performance. Heavy Metal's underground positioning is drawn upon as a resource for identity, a way of connecting to other community members (Weinstein, 2000). However, when "us" and "them" become personalised in more local environments these narratives can still negatively affect daily interactions. Inter-group experiences of "Metallers" versus "rugby heads" and "prissy girls", as characterised by Miss Raven, personalise and materialise these generalised others in daily interactions. This perspective introduces an aspect of exclusion that, somewhat contradictorily, emerges from trying to maintain and communicate a sense of freedom of expression.

Psychological thresholds are created when other people feel excluded through the performance of a Metaller identity that values difference (*cf.* Hodkinson, 2007). Heavy Metal T-shirts displaying aggressive symbolism are a way of expressing this sense of distinctiveness and difference that Metallers maintain over other groups (Brown, 2007; Walser, 1993). The concept of psychological thresholds can also be identified in online contexts, as the performance of identity does not require close geographical proximity (Hodkinson, 2007; Vrooman, 2002). Offline social processes, such as identity expression and threshold maintenance, can be replicated on the Internet (Barkardjieva, 2003). People may be made to feel unwelcome not only in face to face interactions but also through communicating online (Vrooman, 2002). This highlights how online websites are yet another place for the performance of identity and community, a concept I extend in the next Analysis chapter.

Multiple community memberships can result in seemingly contradictory identities, with each group membership requiring a different set of demands regarding symbolic displays such as clothing (*cf.* Hermans, 2001; *cf.* McMillan & Chavis, 1986). People can also transcend psychological and physical thresholds through altering their appearance. Indeed, this is a common occurrence, an everyday practice that requires that people balance and negotiate the symbolic demands of various groups (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). Death's experience was a particularly formal example of this, as his meeting with his operations manager was part of a formal process in dealing with a complaint made by another employee. However, these kinds of situations can also occur relatively seamlessly in everyday life through a process of normalisation. People often have to "get dressed to go to work", altering their appearance to fit the context (Kahn-Harris, 2007). This is not to say that they drastically change their identities or that the environment dictates their behaviour, as Death is still a Metaller when he is at work. Instead it represents a shift in emphasis, as seemingly contradictory identities are navigated in everyday life (Hermans, 2001; Jenkins, 2004).

The fabric of everyday life consists of a variety of different communities and places that people encounter and move through in their daily routines (Hodgetts et al., 2010b). People move through such places with their bodies. In this chapter, I have developed an understanding of the role of the body in expressing identity. The elements I have examined include: identity, community, material objects, and the body combine in the construction of place. Places are developed through the people and practices performed across them, and come to visually resemble their inhabitants (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). In the next chapter I extend the notions introduced in the final section of this chapter regarding the performance of identity and community within and across spaces.

CHAPTER FOUR: IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY ACROSS OFFLINE AND ONLINE PLACES

Social psychologists and geographers have developed the concept of place-based identities to describe the connection between people and particular spaces (Proshansky et al., 1983). This concept is used to explore how people associate their sense of self with particular places and how these places in turn can come to resemble or represent their shared identities (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Lewicka, 2008). For example a concert venue decorated with barb wire, skulls, and religious crosses reflects the inhabitants wearing T-shirts depicting similar iconography. A dialectical set of processes occur whereby people and place come to fit one another. Patrons associate themselves with particular places in which Metal events occur and these places come to represent their inhabitants' identities (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). In other words, the identities of people leak out into the places within which they interact, and these places also sustain a sense of self and belonging for those people (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). In everyday life this seldom occurs in a single space, as identity and community are played out within and across a number of settings (Hannerz, 2003).

Central to this chapter is the importance of physical and symbolic spaces in the performance of identity and community. People draw upon a range of different contexts in developing identity and community that range from large imagined communities (Anderson, 1991), to smaller public spaces (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007), to private, routinely experienced spaces (Mohrmann, 1993). My analysis is presented according to this diminishing scale: from a large public space of the concert, to the smaller public space of local bars, to the private space of the home. I also investigate the role of online spaces that have been conceptualised as a way of extending the private back into the public realm (Livingstone, 2007; Silverstone, 1999). This organization of my analysis provides a structure for examining the ongoing interactions in the everyday lives of Heavy Metal fans. Before moving into the

analysis, however, it will be helpful if I provide further detail about each place along the scale, and what will be explored in them.

In the first section of this chapter, I examine the concert. Concerts are conceptualised in this thesis as communal events that provide opportunities for experiencing and expressing social identities in a large scale communal atmosphere. The concert offers intense experiences of community and group affiliation through an engulfing environment textured by music, sound, light, and dance (*cf.* DeChaine, 2002). Moshing (a form of dance) to Heavy Metal music is a way for participants to perform and embody identity through engaging with their community. By engaging in practises such as moshing, participants feel connected to other attendees in an intense form of community (*cf.* Halnon, 2006). In a concert environment, many bodies become one embodied social identity that inhabits, and potentially enhances, a place. Moshing binds physical bodies through movement, sights, and smells that are mediated by the music (DeChaine, 2002). Through participation moshers extend their identity into communal life, becoming a part of something larger than them and enjoying connections with other participants through the dance (*cf.* Hast, 1993).

In the second section of this chapter, I investigate how large scale events such as concerts are replicated on a more local scale with more regular events. I do this through the example of local bars. As a place that many participants visit on a weekly basis, bars can be identified as an important place to interact with other Metallers. Many of my research participants developed attachments to these places through regular interactions with other patrons. They felt that these were safe places to express their Metaller identity through communal practices that were frequently physical in nature. In doing so, they re-enacted large concert events on a smaller scale by moshing and crowd surfing in smaller groups. Through visiting bars on a weekly basis, my research participants felt connected to other patrons.

The second section also includes an analysis of the intimate space of the home and how it is textured to reflect community affiliations and style (Allan & Crow, 1989). This is similar to the processes described in the preceding chapter regarding materiality and the body. In the third section, I investigate how this relates to domestic dwellings. Homes can become storied, autobiographical representations of their inhabitants through the objects displayed there (Giorgio, et al., 2007). The

home is a place where material objects are displayed to communicate identity and communal ties (Hurdley, 2006). These places reflect the identities and community memberships of the people who live there. The home is a routinely experienced place and so is important in identity formation (Mohrmann, 1993). In this way, peoples' histories and identities rely on their relationship to the places they inhabit in daily life (Binnie et al., 2007).

Within the space of the home, my research participants also engaged with the larger virtual environment provided by social network sites. In the third section, I examine these websites. Social networking sites, such as Bebo and Myspace, have developed as extensions of offline communities and selves (Goodings et al., 2007; *cf.* Kroger, 1996). These sites provide a place for users to experience community through encouraging interactions with others via online postings of images and other identity related material (Goodings et al., 2007). They are, therefore, both private and public spaces (*cf.* Revachi, 2009). They are a private space as they are often developed on home computers and contain personal information. They are also a public space since they are viewable by others as their creators interact online with a wide range of other users. Social networking sites are virtual spaces that are folded into offline contexts (Livingstone, 2007). In other words, the Internet is an online, symbolic space that is accessed via the physical places where computers are located. Silverstone (1999) described this as a double articulation of space, where media users occupy both a physical and symbolic space. In this instance, people who use social networking sites are not only physically sitting at a computer in their homes but also inhabit the web symbolically as they interact with other users through commenting on various postings (such as images).

The fourth section of this chapter is an examination of how my research participants perform identity and community across both online and offline spaces. One of the ways this occurs is through posting mementos of offline events on social networking sites. For example, photographs are shared by posting them online. These images are used to remember and recreate offline events through not only through visual display, but also through comments from viewers. As a result, online and offline places are woven together. This is an everyday practice on social networking sites. Users regularly post photographs and other material online, with their Internet use integrated into their everyday routines (*cf.* Barkardjeva, 2003; Vrooman, 2002).

People switch between offline and online activities, for example checking emails while sitting at home eating breakfast. The analysis illustrates continuities in identity and practices across online and offline spaces that come together to form the life worlds of my research participants.

Concerts as places for intense experiences of Metaller identity and community

In this section I explore the concert as a symbolic, felt, and co-constructed site for community, within which attendees feel a sense of belonging and participation. Peoples' identities often rely on their social location (Musolf, 2003) and their relationships to such places (Proshansky et al., 1983). In her analysis of the football stadium, Charleston (2009) describes the connection between fans and the stadium as an emotional attachment. Anderson (1991) argues that rather than being based on kinship ties, communities are "felt" and "imagined" as real (Bess et al., 2002). In relation to concerts, it is not important to ascertain whether every member of a community communicates or connects with every other person present. Instead, what is important is the significance of the attachment that occurs when communities occupy or move through such spaces.

Concerts were experienced by my research participants as large-scale communal events. As events and places that draw Metallers together, concerts are a place where identity is extended into communal experience. This communal experience was described by my research participants through discussions of the atmosphere they felt while attending a concert. Figure 15 is an image of a typical *Slayer* concert. Accompanying the photograph is an interview extract where Space Ghost recounts the reasons why he enjoyed a recently attended *Slayer* concert.



Figure 15. *Slayer* concert

Space Ghost: Partly I guess it was the atmosphere, like I wasn't up the front moshing but you know in that there's Metal-heads all around you, and the whole atmosphere, like barb wire on the [wall] ... really immersive ... really puts you more in the music rather than just standing there listening.

Dave. So do you think that place added to that atmosphere?

SG. Yeah it was excellent really, really quite gothic looking, there was that pane glass thing going on [stained glass window] and the barbed wire and it definitely added to the effect, it was really good. It definitely has a community feel. Like before the *Slayer* gig you just see them [Metallers].

D. You mean talking?

SG. Oh just talking and getting amped up and banging on the doors and yelling about *Slayer*.

Space Ghost's account illustrates how concerts and venues are socially constructed. In other words, people come together in such places and texture them with meaning through the practices they engage in, and the way in which such places are decorated. Such construction is an active rather than a passive process that engages both people and place. Community sites are transformed through physical

objects that display similar symbolism to the community members who frequent them (O'Donnell et al., 1993). For instance, *Slayer's* aggression and anti-Christian stance is expressed through a combination of gothic and religious iconography and music (see Figure 15). The material objects also function as a sign of community member's ties to a larger system in which the individual is a part (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). The sense of atmosphere and community, described by Space Ghost, occurred not only via the decoration of the venue but also through interacting with others and engaging in practices that incorporate aspects of material objects and place. In other words, identity leaks out into the places in which people interact.

In these ways, music is more than simply aural wallpaper. Wallis and Malm (1984), for example, have commented how music has the capacity to change the feel of a place, similar to how wallpaper can change the feel of a room. This conception, however, implies that places are empty containers to be wall papered, with connections to places being limited to internal feelings. While communal sites are places where people can engage in practices such as moshing, they are not fixed backgrounds or simply containers for social action (Stokols, 1990). Space Ghost's discussion of atmosphere suggests that the music textures the concert environment. Researchers (e.g., Smith, 1994) have used the concept of soundscape to describe this process, describing music as "a texture in which everyday life can take place" (Tacchi, 1998, p.26). People use music to create an aural landscape within which and through which communal experiences occur.

In her seminal work on the sociology of Heavy Metal, Weinstein (2000) describes the band or vocalist from that band as being the mediator in relation to experiences of community. She argues that the energy and emotion expressed by a band in concert acts to involve the audience in the performance. The place of the artist as a cultural hero, and practices such as moshing, are expressions of appreciation from the crowd to the artist. While Weinstein (2000) identifies fans as "getting pumped up for the concert" (p. 205), she paid little attention to the central role fans play in generating the concert atmosphere. The band can yell all they want at the crowd to start a mosh pit,³² but it is the fans who collectively decide whether this will happen.

³² The mosh pit is the space in which moshing occurs and at New Zealand concerts is traditionally immediately in front of the stage.

Through participation in music based practices, the concert is a physical way of collectively experiencing community. While Space Ghost may not be up the front moshing, it is through the combination of various senses and physical movement combine to create an atmosphere that reaches out and draws him in. Even though he is not as physically engaged as other attendees, he still feels immersed in the atmosphere. In his experience, the atmosphere of community is established through music, iconography, and the physical activities of other people in the mosh pit, and all this makes him feel connected to a community of Metallars.

Space Ghost's account reveals the intimate relationship between practices and places (Moore & Miles, 2004). Practices are ways in which culture and community are enacted (Chaney, 2002). As DeCerteau (1984) stated, popular culture is "a way of thinking invested in a way of acting, an art of combination which cannot be dissociated from an art of using" (p. 67). In other words, popular culture and the social groups that arise out of common interests express tastes and ways of thinking through practices. Identity is, therefore, intimately linked to practice - identities are expressed through practices, which in turn texture places (*cf.* Jenkins, 2004). In his research on Death Metal, Berger (1999) describes how fans of the music thought that listeners:

must not merely let sound wash over them, but they should listen to music actively, engaging with the music and making it meaningful ... Death Metal cannot be understood without attention to the active dimension of perception (Berger, 1999, p. 173).

Berger (1999) recognises that music is a way of physically manifesting identity through participation. This conceptualisation makes it clear that, when discussing issues of identity and community, what Metallars do with the music is more important than what is read from lyrics. A shift in focus from lyrical interpretations to media-based practices representing community affiliations and musical enjoyment enables researchers to expose the ways in which groups construct alternative ways of being through practices (*cf.* Couldry & Curran, 2003).

Concerts, then, are not just about watching a performance. Participants in the present research project viewed Heavy Metal as something in which they should be actively involved. Music can be very physical; indeed, at concerts the volume is sufficient to generate tactile vibrations. Many research participants described feeling

such vibrations and the affective experience of becoming involved in communal practices at an event. Moshing was the most frequently mentioned way of becoming involved. It was described as a way to make the communal experience of music more meaningful. Moshing is the act of jumping around aggressively to music, often as a social activity with other Metallers (Tsitsos, 1999). Such practices serve to not only experience community through the shared participation in communal practices, but also reaffirm and extend individual and collective identities. This reinforces the notion that identity is not simply contained within minds but can instead be a very physical and often external matter. Dancing is “the principal way in which musical pleasures become realised in physical movement and bodily grounded aesthetics” (Willis, 1990, p. 65). Figure 16 is a photograph I took at a local Hamilton, New Zealand gig, and features several Metallers moshing.



Figure 16. Moshing to *Blacktooth*

The previous description of moshing does not fully capture the physical experience. In fact, words and pictures cannot adequately do this. Moshing involves a seemingly chaotic tangle of people - bodies are joined as music pounds from the speakers; people collide against each other, jump next to each other, climb over each other, push and shove each other. As with other forms of dancing to live music, moshing

incorporates spatial elements associated with the experience of a particular band in a particular (physical) place.

My participants did not view moshing as an individual expression of identity. Rather, moshing was more often viewed as a communal activity, serving as an expression of enjoyment that brings community members together through interaction and the performing of communal practices. Moshing was a way of engaging with the atmosphere and environment of the live music venue. Through the practice of dancing, “participants are drawn into wider networks of community, activity and associations that grow and develop outside and beyond the dance” (Hast, 1993, p. 24). Architect describes why he moshes:

[When I saw] *Tool*, I came out of [the mosh pit] battered and bruised but once again that’s where I’ve got to be. *Metallica* was the same, went to that at Big Day Out³³ and I’ve got to be ... I was basically one person back from the guard rail ... just to be involved in it ... you can’t go to something like that and stand back, you’ve got to be involved in it, into the whole atmosphere and environment ... I wanna be in it and get involved.

Heavy Metal practices that are a form of dance, such as moshing, are more about elements such as collective expression and belonging rather than individual identities and exclusionary practices (*cf.* Malbon, 1999). Much like Bakhtin’s ([1936] 1984) concept of the spectacle the mosh pit is a “pressing throng, the physical contact of bodies...the individual feels that he [sic] is an indissoluble part of the collectivity, a member of the people’s mass body ... The people become aware of their ... material bodily unity and community” (p. 255). Through moshing, moshers feel part of a larger collective of concert attendees, and members of a wider community of Metallers. It is almost impossible for a participant at a concert not to feel swept up into the larger collective, with the Metallers in the mosh moving backwards and forwards as if one body. There has been a significant body of work conducted within the social sciences concerning crowd behaviour (e.g., Le Bon, 1895; Festinger et al., 1952; Gruzelier, 2007; Reicher, 1987; Zimbardo, 1969), which will be examined in more detail in the second section of the conclusion chapter.

³³ The Big Day Out is an annual New Zealand and Australian music festival held for one day that caters to a wide variety of different musical genres.

Here, however, it is important to note that the people participating in the mosh do not engage in destructive behaviour due to the anonymity that a group affords as other scholars have suggested (e.g., Le Bon, 1895; Festinger et al., 1952; Zimbardo, 1969). Instead, the mosh pit is a place for Metallers to come together as a community and participate in communal practices (*cf.* Gruzelier, 2007).

When in a performance space, the Metal community is embodied as a living, breathing entity. The mosh represents the embodiment of an intense form of community. Embodied identities are not limited to the symbols displayed on bodies, but can incorporate actual events that are experienced physically (*cf.* Cromby, 2005). Through these actions and interactions people participate in and reinforce their cultures and communities (Novack, 1990). This link between affect, music, and bodily movement is difficult to describe. When music is the focus of attention, peoples' experience of it is not only a matter of cognitive processes, as suggested by purely textual analysis of music, but results in a combination of mind and body; of thoughts, feelings and physical actions (DeChaine, 2002). Emotions created through engagements with music are often expressed through a set of embodied practices that produce physical movement (*cf.* Thrift, 2008a). Such emotions also have the ability to make people experience their bodies kinetically in response to musical elements such as rhythm (*cf.* McClary, 1994). In other words, music can make people want to move. The affective experience of music enables "the process of becoming, entangling our bodies, minds, memories, histories, thought, and feelings to the point where they can't be imagined apart from each other" (DeChaine, 2002, p. 86). It is this combination of experience, emotion, and bodily sensations (physical contact, tactile vibrations) which contribute to feelings of community through forms of dance (*cf.* Hast, 1993).

Despite being seemingly chaotic, there are unspoken rules and norms for the mosh pit. Punching and kicking others are not part of moshing, and people who fall over are instantly helped to their feet. While attending a Heavy Metal music festival in Portugal (5 June 2008), I observed a large circular mosh pit during a performance by *Machine Head*. During the moshing, a mosher fell over and was not immediately able to get up because of the chaos around him and his own apparent drunkenness. A group of about ten people, all apparently unknown to the fallen mosher, immediately linked arms and formed a protective circle around him. As several other

moshers bounced off them and continued to mosh, oblivious to the situation, the people forming the protective circle held their position until the fallen moshers were able to get to their feet and rejoin the festivities. The “protectors” all smiled and slapped each other on the back before themselves rejoining the mosh. While moshing may seem like an angry and violent act, it functions within the music. The aim is not to hurt others. After a song ends, the apparently angry and violent crowd turns to smiles as its participants congratulate each other, a process described by Death in an account of his first experience of moshing:

My first mosh pit, when I walked out of it I was expecting people to get angry and I walked out of it and everyone's laughing and cracking up. Oh shit this is fun.

Dave. Yeah I like that too. You go moshing hard out and afterwards everyone's laughing and clapping each other on the back.

De. Yeah some guy's there with blood all over his face going 'YEAHHHHH!'

Moshers who are familiar with the practices of Heavy Metal are aware of its function as a way of experiencing community and enjoying the music. Contained within one area, the aggression of the mosh pit expresses enjoyment of music and community solidarity (Gruzelier, 2007). Put another way, moshing is an appropriation of violence that uses aggressive posturing and physical contact in order to experience togetherness. The laughing and back-slapping that often occurs after a song finishes is a form of communal bonding (Weinstein, 2000). This is similar to practices within sport - the handshake after a bout or the acknowledgement of enjoyable but fierce competition allows problematic elements of aggressive interaction to be transcended by promoting a sense of unity within a group (Gruzelier, 2007). With the change from apparent anger to smiles and grins, moshing emerges as an enjoyable Metaller practice that provides a social context for community to develop.

In sum, the concert represents a large imagined community (Anderson, 1991; Weinstein, 2000). It would be impossible for any concert attendee to know everyone present. However, concerts serve as large scale places to experience community, a way to feel connected to a wider group of Metallers (*cf.* Anderson, 1991). Concerts are a communal site where people experience an intense form of community through coming into close contact with others (DeChaine, 2002). By becoming involved in the

concert through moshing, which involves active engagement with the music and other fans, attendees immerse themselves in the atmosphere (DeChaine, 2002; Hast, 1993; Tsitsos, 1999). Moshing serves as an extremely physical way of uniting Metallers at a concert (Gruzelier, 2007). The sense of community generated through attending and participating at concerts may be taken into more localised environments, such as local bars or homes. The relationship between the concert and these localised contexts for community is the focus of the following section.

Shared practices in more local settings: The bar and the home

It is not only large-scale concerts that are important to the social identity of Metallers. Concerts featuring internationally renowned Heavy Metal bands are relatively infrequent in New Zealand and so to focus solely on these events would be to ignore the importance of more frequently occurring and often everyday routines and events in communal experiences (*cf.* Mohrmann, 1993). Such regular activities usually “cluster around smaller scale spatialities and circadian temporal rhythms” (Binnie et al., 2007, p. 166). In other words, smaller and everyday places are important in relation to identity constructions. This section explores the use of Heavy Metal music in the localised environments of bars and private homes.

The two most common physical places discussed by my research participants when talking about everyday Metaller places were local bars and their own homes.³⁴ Local Heavy Metal bars were frequently identified as more personalised sub-community sites for the wider Metaller community (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). These local groups were viewed as enabling affective aspects of community such as feelings of security and belonging. For Misery, community was most closely identified with Hysteria, a now defunct Auckland Heavy Metal bar she visited regularly:

It was like our home away from home. It wouldn't matter how drunk we were, what sort of mood we were in, we could always go there and ... party our asses off and harass [local DJs] to play what we

³⁴ The symbolic place of social networking sites will be discussed in the next section.

wanted to hear. We pretty much knew everyone there and there was never any trouble there unless it was cos of outside people ... and just something about the atmosphere in that place was really really good ... Always felt safe there ... It was just so relaxed and I think it was just the fact that everybody knew everybody else and it was like a huge family.

Misery mentions themes that theorists identify as being central to a definitions of community (*cf.* McMillan & Chavis, 1986), such as safety (“someone would look after me”), belonging (“always felt really comfortable”) and a sense of community thresholds (“never any trouble in there unless it was cause of outsiders”). This is analogous to Filf’s comments about feelings of security and family quoted in the previous chapter. Misery’s account provides an explanation for how these feelings develop and their connection to place. Feelings of community have developed through performance of practices within the bar, including “partying [their] asses off” and interactions with other people. Through these interactions and practices, a strong sense of connection and an identity of a Hysteria “family member” were established between Misery, other Hysteria patrons, and the physical place of the bar. Misery’s account explains how this process is extended from mere discussion into the physical realm of engagement and space.

While Misery’s connection to Hysteria is a felt place-identity (Proshansky et al., 1983), it is developed and maintained not by thoughts and emotions alone but also through the physical activities performed there. Places are constructed through performance (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). Figure 17 is a photograph from a gig at which Nail’s band *Chugonaut* performed. The photograph contains within it an example of crowd surfing - the crowd surfer in this instance is the person wearing the shoes and jeans visible on the right of the image. Crowd surfing is a common practice at Heavy Metal and Rock concerts. It is the practice of being lifted up, either voluntarily or involuntarily, above the crowd and being passed along over the heads of other people. Crowd surfing is a physical manifestation of being immersed in the music. Surfers feel actively involved in the concert and the Metaller community through this practice, and use it as an attempt to recreate the concert atmosphere in more routine environments such as local gigs (*cf.* DeChaine, 2002). In an interview, Filf describes his fondness for crowd surfing.



Figure 17. Crowd surfing at a *Chugonaut* gig

Filf: Crowd surfing's the shit³⁵ eh? I surfed in [friend]'s kitchen the other week. I crowd surfed at [a strip club] on Wednesday; got the boys to lift me up. I've pretty much taken to crowd surfing everywhere; it's become a personal challenge. Crowd surfing, if you've never been crowd surfing you've never lived; it's such a good feeling. The best crowd surf would've been *Lamb of God*; I got up on my knees crowd surfing going 'Rarrrr!' Then got up and still being crowd surfed and [friend] was right there and I was like 'Rarrrr!'

I observed Filf crowd surfing at several Heavy Metal events. While crowd surfing is commonly associated with large scale concerts, it also occurs in smaller gigs at local bars. At these events, crowd surfing serves similar functions to moshing. Although not strictly a form of dance, it is also, like moshing, a group activity and a physical way of expressing and sharing an emotional and cognitive experience of the music

³⁵ In this context, "Crowd surfing's the shit" means Filf likes crowd surfing.

with others. It often takes more than one person to lift someone up and carry them over the crowd. Indeed, the fact that a person is carried across a crowd highlights the communal nature of crowd surfing. In this way, crowd surfing at concerts operates as a communal activity. Whether a person is a lifter, carrier, or surfer, they can gain a sense of community through their involvement. For others who are not directly involved, crowd surfing provides a way of adding to the atmosphere created in a venue.

In the passage above, Filf describes how he crowd surfs at sites that may not be immediately associated with such a practice. Crowd surfing in a friend's kitchen is a way of "concerting" a local space, linking the two sites of concert and home through a shared practice. This represents an attempt to transform the space through practice (*cf.* Leyshon et al., 1995). In his attempt to recreate the concert atmosphere in a more private environment, Filf alters the private space. The private space and the public place are now interwoven and, if others accept his behaviour, the party is a recreation of the intensive community experience of the concert.

Iconography and material objects also play a significant role in the social construction of place in more localised places. Figure 18 shows one of the many poster boards that are on display in Drummer and *Slayer* Fan's garage. Images on this board display groupings of three aspects of Drummer and *Slayer* Fan's identities. At the top of the board are pictures of Heavy Metal musicians, predominantly *Metallica*. At the bottom of the poster board are pictures relating to the Treaty of Waitangi³⁶ and their own ethnicity as Maori people. Between these two groupings are pictures of their children.

³⁶ The Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 and is New Zealand's founding document. It is an agreement drawn up between representatives of the British Crown and the Maori people (the indigenous people of New Zealand). It was intended as an exchange of sovereignty in return for a guarantee of the authority of the Maori chiefs and the protection of Maori land and resource rights, as well as extending to the Maori people the same rights and privileges as British citizens (State Services Commission, 2005).



Figure 18. Drummer and *Slayer* Fan's poster board

Traditional semiotic analysis conceptualises the study of texts as providing ways to interpret relationships (Scholes, 1982). An analysis of the board using this approach could interpret the positioning of such pictures and photographs as representing a hierarchy of importance, with Drummer and *Slayer* fan's Heavy Metal identities taking priority over their ethnicity, and their family being the link between the two. However, the suggestion that one aspect of their identity takes precedence over another would be regarded as an insult by Drummer and *Slayer* Fan. Instead, the display emphasises the importance of all these aspects of self. The groupings highlight how all three aspects are significant, and while different contexts may mean that one component of identity may be emphasised or de-emphasised through stylisation (*cf.* Paechter, 2003), in a home environment such as this all three aspects of identity are freely displayed (*cf.* Allan & Crow, 1989).

Duncan (1981) has described the home as a localised place in which to express individual identity or a symbol of the self. Homes can be sites for displays of material goods. Such objects are both an expression of individual identity and of social relationships (Jackson & Moores, 1995), linking people to other individuals and communities (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Drummer and *Slayer* Fan's poster boards connect them to other family members and to the wider Metaller

community. At the same time, they give the home itself meaning through the emotional attachments to place that are developed by such personal displays (cf. Proshansky et al., 1983). Material objects and their socially constructed meanings transform places into a representation of the inhabitants and their collective and personal identities and symbolisations (Giorgio et al., 2007). Through decoration, Drummer and *Slayer* Fan have developed an intimate space that comes to represent their identities and communal memberships. In doing so, they feel connected to the place as their personal relationships and feelings leak out onto the poster boards to be communicated to others (Hurdley, 2006).

Within the Heavy Metal community, this practice of expressing identity and connectedness often takes the form of decorating places with Heavy Metal posters, concert tickets, or other music-based memorabilia. Displayed in Drummer and *Slayer* Fan's garage are several poster boards with a range of photographs. In this way, the garage serves similar functions to a photographic album in communicating its owners' histories and identities through the items on the wall. Drummer and *Slayer* Fan's decorations are not limited to the poster boards, as the entire garage at their family home has been converted into a practice space for Drummer's band. Figure 19 shows one wall and part of the ceiling of *Slayer* Fan and Drummer's garage. The previous owner of the house and section was a mechanic who used the space for work purposes, and so the original garage included a vehicle pit and a high ceiling. *Slayer* Fan and Drummer have transformed the garage into a musical practice space for *UTU*. This has involved the installation of a new ceiling obtained from the demolition of an old department store, and the ceiling has also been completely covered in recycled egg cartons, used as a means of sound proofing the garage for when the band is practicing.



Figure 19. Drummer and *Slayer* Fan's garage wall and ceiling

Dave. I love this place eh? The egg cartons.

Slayer Fan. They've all got a story to tell. They're from all over the place. That little bit over there is from Texas, over there Kawerau, all these are from Matata; they've just been delivered, red ones from Napier ... This was just a tin shell when we got it and my brother's a builder, put the roof in from the old DEKA store? He demolished that and all those batts. [Drummer] put the walls in, took the door from the wash house ... it's got a mechanic's pit down there. That's what it was; this was a mechanic's bloody place when we scored it.

The garage and the material objects displayed there have become, in a sense, autobiographical, since they represent various experiences related to the people who live there (*cf.* Giorgio et al., 2007). Each poster, photograph, and even egg carton has an associated story of its reason for being there and what it represents. For example, displayed on the wall are a framed photograph of a *Slayer* concert and an old framed *Jimi Hendrix* concert photograph that previously belonged to *Slayer* Fan's father (slightly right of centre of the photograph). The top framed photograph depicts a *Jimi Hendrix* concert, taken by *Slayer* Fan's father, while the lower photograph was taken by *Slayer* Fan and Drummer at a *Slayer* concert. These photographs represent two separate concert events that are approximately forty years apart. In displaying

these two items together in a home environment, *Slayer* Fan and Drummer are weaving together various aspects of identity and community. Through displaying the photographs they are linking themselves to an immediate family member across space and time. While these have public meanings and depict public events, they also have more personal and private meanings (Rechavi, 2009). The concert-going Metallur identities of *Slayer* Fan and Drummer have leaked out into a semi-private space of the home. The public identities have become further personalised by links to history and to family, as represented by the combination of these two artefacts. *Slayer* Fan and Drummer's identities exist both in the present and located across time and place.

Within this place, Drummer also moves from being a consumer of media to being a producer, from listening to music to creating music. In this garage space, *Slayer* Fan and Drummer express their active participation in the Heavy Metal community. Through such engagement *Slayer* Fan and Drummer contest conceptual distinctions between producers and the consumers, and reinforce the understanding that fans of media forms are not isolated viewers or listeners (Hills, 2002). The production of media is manifested in this place – Drummer's band practices bring the members together in the practice space, leading to interactions that further develop their Heavy Metal identities. The material objects displayed on the walls, in combination with the band's activities, all serve to represent the identities of the owner's identities (cf. Leyshon et al., 1995; Noble, 2004). Representations of these identities and autobiographies extend out on to the garage walls which are covered in posters, photographs, and ticket stubs of concerts attended.

The implication of this is that geographical places are involved in complex relationships with the people that inhabit them. Through the performing of practices, the decoration of place, and sharing such processes with other people, individuals and communities develop place-based identities (Lewicka, 2008). Inhabitants of such spaces are imaginative users of their surroundings. They create, appropriate, and develop a place to belong out of the physical environment, which in turn results in strong feelings of attachment (Korpela, 1989). A place's inhabitants have created it in the sense of providing decoration and giving the place some form of function. In turn, by giving an indication of the type of people that inhabit it, the place gives information on how people should behave within such a place. This place-people

relationship reinforces individual and collective identities (Cooper, 1974). The decoration of Drummer and *Slayer* Fan's garage indicates the kinds of practices that can be acceptably performed within the place. With its focus on music, the garage is very clearly a Metallor place where this form of music is not only welcomed but is regularly performed.

In sum, the imagined community experienced at a concert can be taken into more localised, everyday environments. These routinely experienced places come to represent their inhabitants as peoples' identities and communal affiliations leak out into the environment. Through the practices that people engage in within a place, such locations can be transformed through decoration and material objects (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Duncan, 1981), in a similar fashion to the way Metallors' bodies develop and reflect identity. The material objects discussed in the previous chapter can be displayed in the home, "storying" the place and reflecting the autobiographies of their inhabitants (Duncan, 1981; Giorgio et al., 2007). People develop relationships to such places, as they experience a feeling of belonging and connectedness, a sense of "our place" (Lewicka, 2008). The private place of the home can then be extended back out into the public realm through online social networking sites (*cf.* Goodings et al., 2007; *cf.* Rechavi, 2009), an issue which will be examined in the next section.

Taking identity and community online


With the advent of new information and communications technologies associated with the rise of the Internet, social scientists have begun to explore processes of identity and community as these are played out online (Barkardjieva, 2003; Goodings et al., 2007). Online social networks have been conceptualised as virtual communities within which identities are incorporated, displayed, and negotiated. Rheingold's (1993) definition of online communities consisting of sustained online interactions is often referred to in recent academic literature (e.g., Hodkinson, 2007). In this section, I will argue that these virtual communities are not always distinct from offline communities, and, in the case of Heavy Metal fans, they provide another

place, in some respects like a concert or other favoured venue, for reaffirming a person's identity as a Metaller (*cf.* Goodings et al., 2007).

Social networking sites become places to perform identity, share interests, and experience community (Goodings et al., 2007). Users' web pages are constantly upgraded and developed by the addition of new photographs, videos, and blogs. The result of this is the formation of yet another performative place, built through interactions of the users and the everyday use of such sites and technology (*cf.* Vrooman, 2002). This section documents how social networking sites are representational and interactional places to perform identity and experience community through the use of text and images. My research participants expressed their identities and communal ties online via texts relating to personal information, and visually through posting images and photographs of offline events and Heavy Metal icons. When describing their online expressions of identity and community, the research participants made frequent mention of usernames, personal information, images, and what is referred to as the friends list. I will now explore each of these in relation to the performance of identity and expression of community. The section following the present one will explore this dialectical relationship in more detail in relationship to the fluidity of identity across places.

The top of Myspace and Bebo social networking sites contains the username and a personal profile description. These serve as a way to present the self and his or her links to others. Figure 20 is an example of Ripper's Bebo page, displaying his username (top left hand corner) and profile information (to the right of the username and image).

<JakeTehRipper>



- [Send a Message](#) | [Saved Messages](#)
- [Write Friend Story](#)
- [Remove as Friend](#)
- [Use this Skin](#) | [Favorites](#)
- [Send-It](#)
- [Block](#) | [Report Abuse](#)

I am pretty true to myself.

I'm flating in Hamilton. It is dirty.

Among other things, I like metal. Without it I wouldn't be who I am today, despite the fact I try to distance myself from its somewhat unwholesome environment. Regardless, sometimes its reputation precedes me.

I'm second year BSc, majoring in Chemistry, at Waikato University. I like Science because I believe in that for which there is proof, reason, and logic. Plus all your degree are belong to Chemsitry.

I like to get out on a good walk or bike. It helps keep you grounded.

I also like to shoot stuff, on the computer and in RL.

I don't like to do any of this in the sun. I hate the sun, and I hate summer. I much prefer the unending grimness of winter.

And I don't work because I'm too busy doing nothing else, hurr hurr.

Sweet Stuff
Metal, Airsoft, Guns, Computers, Games, Urban Exploration, Drinking, Biking, Band Shirts, Rain, Winter, Bleakness, Hackey, Solitude, Trolling, Barbeque, Pies, Walking, Solitaire Showdown, Elastomania, My CFX, Mi Goreng, Painful High-Fives, Summer Undies, Mandumping, A Cold Beer in a Hot Shower

Music
Immortal, AFI, Misfits, Bathory, Danzig, Mayhem, Slayer, Sonata Arctica, 1349, HammerFall, DragonForce, Emperor, Burzum, Darkthrone, I, Falkenbach, Enslaved, Marduk, Metallica, Ihsahn, Judas Priest, Aura Noir, Nile, Nightwish, Gorgoroth, Tiger Army, Manowar, Sabricon, Behemoth, Ensiferum, Dark Funeral, Amesoeurs, Peste Noire, Halgadom, Nattefrost, Drudkh, Cyclopropane, Windir, Death, Megadeth, Edguy, Temnozor, Empyrium, Venom, Lifelover, Winds, Motörhead, Gehennah, Gorgasm, Shining, Zyklon-B

Movies
Apocalypse Now, American Beauty, One Flew Over The Cuckoos Nest, The Shining,

Figure 20. Section of Ripper's Bebo page

Usernames are displayed not only at the top of the page, but also appear on any posting the user makes on other web pages. Through repetitive use, these names become familiar and recognisable to other users. While at first usernames might seem arbitrary, they are often carefully chosen to express identity because of their frequent use (Stommel, 2007). They are “emblems of self construction” (Stommel, 2007, p. 142) with pseudonyms such as Ripper’s “JakeTehRipper” representing his identity on MySpace. Usernames such as these are commonly used by the participants in the present research project to metonymically represent their identities and group affiliations. The names people choose to represent themselves online are usually selected with care to portray both personal and social identities. Such identities and the usernames that represent them are often developed through a complex series of interactions and events. This is reflected in Ripper’s choice of pseudonym and, in the usernames of other participants – for example Nail and Filf. Their usernames evoke Heavy Metal associations with lyrical themes of power and offer connotations of violent and/or deviant themes (*cf.* Walser, 1993). They represent experiences and cultural representations which are usually explained or supported through the accompanying personal profile description.

In his personal information, Ripper presents specific conceptualisations of his sense of self. To do this, he has chosen to describe those aspects of self that he considers particularly important in his profile description. The first four aspects of self that he discusses are that he is true to himself, that he lives in Hamilton, is a Metallur, and that he is studying Chemistry at University. These four items introduce aspects of personality, geographical location, personal interest, and occupation. Personal profile information of this kind is a way of constructing an overall picture of the self that the user wants to present to the viewer. As it is located at the top of the page it is often the first material that people read when deciding whether to interact further with the user.

In this way, my research participants did not use expressions of identity to be anonymous or to create a fantasy persona, but instead to present a specific conceptualisation of self. When discussing his profile, Ripper explains the need for profile information and online behaviour to be consistent with his sense of self offline:

I don't like to think I'm any different. I think it'd be stupid to portray yourself as someone you're not online ... that's one of the things I live by, you have to be true to yourself and what you believe in and stand up for your beliefs and that kind of thing, otherwise you're nothing basically and ... be who you are in everything and that includes online profiles and stuff. There's no point in advertising yourself as someone you're not ... it's important to me that [other users] and everyone else is not fooled by me pretending to be someone I'm not.

In my interactions with Ripper, I found that the groups that he identifies with and discloses on his Bebo page, in combination with his username, profile description, and in our interview, are attempts by him to present an independent, autonomous individual who believes in what he perceives as logic and reason, and is relatively free of external influence. Ripper's presentation of self he has chosen to post online is being used to present a particular personal identity of strength and individuality. Through this, Ripper is trying to maintain his sense of a distinct, personal identity across contexts (*cf.* James, 1890). Such a presentation seems to contradict his intimations of group affiliation as a Metallur indicated through other aspects of his personal information and through his list of favourite Heavy Metal bands, which suggest not only a particular aesthetic taste but also a wish to be recognised as

belonging to a specific community. The online expression of a particular social identity with particular aesthetic tastes can be, and is, used to encourage interactions, so that identity is extended into communal life (*cf.* Kroger, 1996). Community, therefore, is a social network offering support and identity derived from interactions with others in everyday life (Obst et al., 2002; Pretty et al., 2007). A need for social interaction could be one of the reasons why Ripper participates in online social networking sites. People are more than just individuals free of external influences. They are social beings who need to interact (Mezirow, 2000). Scholarly work in social psychology frequently presents a dichotomy of either personal or social identities (Jenkins, 2004). People, however, often experience themselves as both individuals and as members of communities (Arnow, 1994). Such a conceptualisation points to the importance of the community in the development of personal identity. This implies that not only can the group be an extension of an individual, but the individual can be an extension of the group.

Images are also used as a way of expressing personal identity which is then extended into communal life, connecting my research participants with larger communal groupings (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Much like usernames and personal information, images are also both personal and relational. For example, Death's and Misery's usernames were chosen in order to not only metonymically represent them as individual Metallers, but also to indicate their relationship to each other. As two people who are romantically connected, they view their relationship to each other as complementary. They also perceive the concepts of death and misery as complimentary and so have adopted these two terms as their usernames. Their joint Myspace site has come to function as a place that represents their relationship to each other. When I first met Death and Misery in person a mutual friend introduced me to them by their online names. That introduction illustrates how the shared identity has transcended the online realm and moved offline, as Misery describes below:

Those names were just names we came up with purely for our Myspace site. Let's have a really cool name for our Myspace ... and [Death] was already 'I love Death' so I said 'Okay Death and [pauses] Misery' and he was like 'Fuck yeah that's it!' It just stuck. Yeah. It's only because we wanted to portray ourselves in a certain

way on Myspace. Kind of like stuck and now quite a few people don't actually know my real name.

The development of Misery's Metaller identity has been possible through a series of interactions with her partner and with other people who have come to know her through online interactions. Not only has this social identity been declared online, but it has continued to operate in a number of different contexts and situations, as Death and Misery's complimentary usernames have been constructed by online and offline interactions that they experience together. Through this construction, their pseudonyms are part of an overall package that represents their relationship.

In addition to their usernames, Death and Misery have chosen to express their relationship visually through their choice of profile picture. These pictures can be personal photographs depicting people (both the user and/or others) or images found or uploaded online. Such images may come to represent a complex series of relationships and interactions. Figure 21 is the profile picture for Death and Misery's shared Myspace page, and is also a painting hanging in the lounge of their family home. It is a yin yang design they found online that incorporates the Grim Reaper and a beautiful dark haired woman. In the accompanying interview excerpt Misery explains how this image represents not only their individual selves, but also their relationship together.



Figure 21. Death and Misery

Misery: It's the yin yang cos ... it's the picture on [our] Myspace and we went to a gypsy fair and saw it and we were like 'Oh my god we need it' and we actually spent the last of our money buying that and it was like 'Wow' and ... when we get the Fairmont [their family car] done we're gonna get it airbrushed on the bonnet ... and have Death and Misery written on the back ... cos ... that's like me and [Death] ... cos I've always found all these pictures...it's a demon and a woman and [in] all the pictures the women are blonde? And I could never find one of a woman with dark hair and then I saw that [yin yang picture] and I was like 'Fuck that is so cool. That is so Death and Misery'.

Misery perceives the picture as representing her (the woman), her partner Death (the Grim Reaper) and their relationship together (the yin yang symbol). In this case, the image weaves together their personal and social identities both literally (Misery having dark hair) and metonymically (as Metallers in a relationship). It also incorporates an appropriation of a Chinese symbol meaning the meeting of two different but often complementary states (as cited in Yang, 2006) and a specific event (finding a physical copy of the painting together). By choosing this image as

their profile picture, Misery represents this series of meanings and events. Her discussion of this picture highlights how images can function as a cultural autobiography for their owners through associations with specific moments and relationships (Dittmar, 2004).

Misery and Death's Myspace page is used to represent interactions and relationships that are larger than them as individuals (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). The meaning lies in and beyond the image and draws together two people in time and space, etching it both online and offline in public display (Goodings et al., 2007; Hodgett et al., 2007). The image draws Death and Misery together via their online presence as a couple. The success of such usernames and associated images has enabled Death and Misery to present their relationship across different contexts, moving from online (Myspace) to its use across a variety of different situations (meeting people at a concert) and objects (their car). Usernames and images are some of the many ways to weave together online and offline interactions in the creation of identity and in experiencing community (to be discussed in the next section). In this way, social networking sites textually and visually represent complex systems of relationships and interactions. These interactions combine online and offline events, identity and community.

Thus, social networking sites can textually and visually represent complex systems of relationships and interactions that are further represented via the friends list. Figure 22 depicts the friends list section of Flash Medallion's Bebo page.

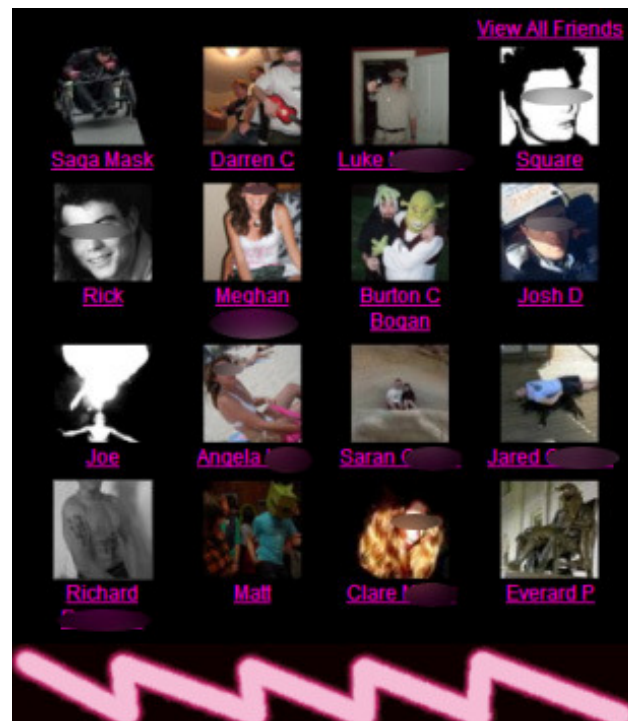


Figure 22. Flash Medallion's friends list

Friends lists change regularly as people make new online connections and add them or as they delete old ones. New friends may also be added through various forms of interactions, such as meeting new people face-to-face, as described by Miss Raven:

That's like another girl, I went to a gig one night at Krazy Jacks [a local bar] and people that were on the door, both of them, came up to me and said 'You're on [local DJ's] profile on Bebo eh? You're one of his friends? So am I. I'm going to add you'. So they did and I got three friends out of that [gig]. Just cos they knew who I was from the Internet and met me and said they were going to add me.

In developing a friends list, users create hierarchies of friends according to their preferences. If new friends are added further up in the hierarchy, then they shift others lower. Some users take this hierarchy very seriously, seeing it as a reflection of the nature of their relationships with others. For example, in the figure above Flash Medallion is linked to family, friends, work mates, and even to me as a researcher (Burton C Bogan). Of particular note is the structure of the list, with his top friend being his brother (Saga Mask), followed by five close friends. As these friendships evolve, altered positions visually change the nature of the website through a reordering of the photographic hyperlinks.

Yang's (2006) conception of the self provides useful insights into both online and offline social networks. In exploring social networking sites, he positions the self as the centre of a complex network of relationships that connect an individual's actions to the wider environment. The self is like a cobweb that is linked to other webs, or identities, illustrating interconnected relationships. Every person's actions affect other webs, resulting in regular changes to the shape and nature of the network of cobwebs. Because of the cobweb structure of multiple hyperlinks, social networking sites make it practically impossible to identify any single, clearly defined community in the way suggested by Rheingold (1993). For example, people make online connections to each other, represented through friends lists, for a range of reasons including: shared interests, a common place of employment, or through familial ties.

Social networking sites, therefore, are representational spaces that extend the offline self into the online world. These web sites are one of the places my research participants used to interact with each other. The examples in this section have discussed the use of text and images to express personal and social identities online. These expressions of identity serve to encourage interactions with other like-minded people to experience a sense of community. Bebo and Myspace represent complex networks of websites that link individuals who influence each other through their actions and choices. My participants' experiences illustrate the importance of interaction in the formation and maintenance of social identities (Charon, 1979). Through these expressions and linkages to other pages, users of social networking sites develop representational and interactional places for experiencing community (Goodings et al., 2007). These websites are interwoven into peoples' everyday experiences and routines, a concept that will be further examined in the following section.

Spanning the online and offline in everyday life

The following section examines how the participants in this research project experience identity and community across online and offline spaces. Their experiences across these spaces suggests an alternative view to the customary assumptions of a dichotomy of online and offline identities. Some academic research

has tended to position the online and the offline in opposition, with the virtual as a new and distinct cultural formation, and the geographical offline as outdated and in some cases no longer relevant (Watson, 1997). This is an artificial distinction, as the online exists in the offline world and representations and relationships of the offline are displayed online. Since the technology relies on the people who use it, the Internet should be situated within broader social and political contexts (Barkardjieva, 2003; Robins, 1996). “Virtual communities do not exist in a completely different world” (Robins, 1996, p. 16); instead, they can be integrated into people’s everyday communal lives. In essence, online communication is just one of the interconnected ways in which people socialise (Stone, 1991).

The complexity of everyday life in relation to online places was reflected in the accounts of my research participants, who seemed unsure of whether to describe their online groups as a community. This is illustrated by Miss Raven’s discussion of the interview themes that I had sent her prior to our interview. One of these themes asked participants whether they considered Heavy Metal to be a community (See Appendix A):

It was the community one that got me though, what do I say to that? I don’t participate in the community ... purely cos I don’t really leave the house. Participating in my community, like for me is my family and friends and the guy from the Shell [a gas station] across the road when I go to get a pie [laughs] cos he has a great big tattoo on his arm too and we start talking cos we’ve both got tats but apart from that since I’ve been out of the workforce ... I don’t feel like I’m a part of anything anymore.

Dave. What about the online stuff, do you feel like that’s some sort of community?

M. Yeah I think it is but at the end of the day in a general sense I tend to stick to the background? Sometimes I get in there and rar rar rar but most of the time I just stand back and laugh at everyone else. I throw in my two cents when it’s asked for but I just keep a low profile really.

Miss Raven’s account illustrates how her online experiences and interactions are not bound by physical limits or strict community demarcations. Indeed, Miss Raven demonstrates that online technologies provide a means of extending communing

practices across time and space. Online communities are often an extension of offline communities, and are just one of the places within which Miss Raven interacts. Her experiences online are an extension and means of continuing to engage in community that is grounded offline in other spaces like her home and in discussions with a person she regularly talks to about tattoos at the gas station. When Miss Raven wants to experience feelings of community or make a contribution to an online conversation, she chooses to move from “the background” to interact with others. Miss Raven’s discussion highlights how social networking sites are places to commune. Rather than viewing them in isolation (e.g., Rheingold, 1993) or glorifying them as some sort of utopia, a more useful conceptualisation of such web pages is as one among several places where people use to experience community (Robins, 1996). For Miss Raven, social networking sites provide relevant examples of the dialectical relationship across both online and offline places in which she engages in conversations.

In addition to the profile pictures and as links to other users’ pages discussed in the previous section, photographs are also contained within what are designated as virtual photograph albums. These albums are represented in a similar way to friends lists, with a hyperlink taking viewers to a collection of photographs. In this way, social networking sites can serve similar functions to physical photograph albums in representing relationships as mementos of past events (*cf.* Radley, 1990). More than this, however, objects such as photographs are a way of communing across online and offline spaces. Figure 23 is a photograph that depicts Miss Raven at a party talking to someone she had recently met. Accompanying the photograph is Miss Raven’s description of the night’s events, and her explanation of how the photograph ended up on her friend’s Bebo site.



Figure 23. Miss Raven at the “Bebo Party”

Miss Raven: That was at a friend’s 30th [birthday party] ... cos a few of her friends, or acquaintances or friends of friends were all at the party as well and they had started talking to me online a couple of weeks prior, knowing that I was going to be at this party and then I met them there...it was just one of those things where ‘Oh you’re off the Internet’ ... this is the guy I met, started talking to him online and then met him at a party ... it was a meeting of pretty much people off Bebo really, cos some of the people I took along with me and some others I knew through Bebo, so they met each other ... There were jokes all night about ‘Haha don’t pose like that or it’ll end up on Bebo.’ Sure enough, three months later it ends up on Bebo.

At the party described by Miss Raven, people had previously interacted online through Bebo, met in person at the party, and then photographs of the event were posted online. The online representational place was brought into the physical one through discussions, and then back online again through posting the photograph online. Thus, online Bebo sites and the offline place where the party was held

converged via the photographs that were taken by Miss Raven and other party attendees, as well as through the discussions they had regarding the posting of these photographs to the web sites.

In this example, the complexity of places for experiencing community is negotiated and re-negotiated through interactions (party), representations (photographs), and postings (online). Rather than being a one-way system where offline identities are extended into the online, the online can also be played out dialectically offline. Here, Miss Raven's and other party-goers' social networking sites are shaping the offline place through photographs. For example, party-goers referenced the online through comments about photographs "ending up on Bebo". They were aware of the ability to experience community across places through photographs and discussions. This highlights the fluidity of community thresholds and the relationship between online and offline domains. Such divisions between places are not static and rigid but instead have the ability to be transcended in the course of everyday lives.

The relationship between online and offline is also illustrated textually through the posting of comments on social network site message boards. Much like online comments posted about photographs, these comments make reference to offline experiences, particularly in relation to events attended. Many discussions are socially situated and refer to a shared past (Barkardjieva, 2003). For example, sharing experiences of an event provides an opportunity to interact with other users by describing and discussing that place-based experience (Massey, 1998). After Space Ghost, Ripper, and I had attended a *Carcass* concert, Space Ghost and I contextualised our experiences via what are referred to as Bebo status updates, and a resulting conversation.

Space Ghost status: *CARCASS!*

Burton C Bogan status: The threads of global fabric are untied!

Burton C Bogan: Fucken *CARCASS!* I'm still buzzing. Although the diseased penii...not a fan...can't believe [Ripper] missed that...lucky him!³⁷

³⁷ "Diseased penii" refers to an incident at the concert where pictures of diseased penises were flashed on monitors behind the band as they performed.

Space Ghost: Hahahaha yeah man, I can still hear the ringing. The penii were...an interesting touch. *Carcass* is lucky they don't have to look at them. *CARCASS!*

This online text conversation was initiated through a feature of Bebo pages that allows users to post short statements as part of a status update.³⁸ The resulting brief conversation made reference to a specific incident at the concert where images of diseased penises were displayed. Both Space Ghost and I posted status updates relating to the concert - Space Ghost wrote "*CARCASS!!*" to which I then responded with a brief lyrical quote from my favourite *Carcass* song: "The threads of global fabric are untied!"

In the example above, I started a conversation with Space Ghost through referring to past interactions and experiences - a specific incident at the *Carcass* concert. This highlights how short quotes and comments such as status updates are used as a way of inviting comment and initiating discussion. Discussions most commonly occur in relation to the shared knowledge of place. Despite the fact that this conversation is occurring online there is still a sense of located-ness, where a shared past at a particular place is remembered with others (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). Within this very brief exchange, Space Ghost and I not only mention the event, but also various elements within that event. These include other people (Ripper), sounds (ringing in the ears), emotional experiences (I'm still buzzing), and iconography at the event (grotesque images). The online interaction with Space Ghost is grounded in offline experiences of an event. A combination of senses, memories, and images that occurred at the concert are referenced and remembered through two short quotes on a social networking site.

Because of our references to various physical and sensual experiences of the concert in our online interaction, the sense of located-ness is more than simply words. As both of us had attended the event, there are emotions generated from remembering what it was like to attend. Movement from the offline to the online is more than just reading a quote that makes a reference to an event and remembering

³⁸ Status updates are short text-based posts of up to 140 characters displayed at the top of the user's profile page. They have become such a useful and popular tool that, at the time of writing, they had become closely associated with Twitter, a website devoted solely to such micro-blogging (<http://twitter.com>).

a place: it is also about remembering and in some sense recreating the emotional experience of attending. I initiated this conversation by mirroring his status update in a comment (“*CARCASS!!*”). When he responded with the same reply I felt a sense of connection and belonging and so this online experience of community consisted of a shared sense of place and related identities (*cf.* Goodings et al., 2007). Through the use of comments posted online and further discussions regarding the concert Space Ghost and I communed across online and offline places. The positive and enthusiastic evaluations of the concert (with our mirrored “cries” of “*CARCASS!!*”) reflected a sense of shared experience. In re-sharing we re-experience community across places through further interactions. In this way, the representational spaces of social networking sites can facilitate memories of past events (*cf.* Olsen, 2003).

Another example of personal postings that foster interaction is online blogs. Blogs have been described as a form of personal media, or as digital tools for interpersonal communication (Luders, 2008). These diary type entries are often used by their creators to recount and share a range of experiences (Jenkins, 2006). Through an increased use of personal media, individuals and groups can describe and publish their interpretations of the world for others to read and discuss. Blogs on Myspace and Bebo also have the feature of providing other users an opportunity to post feedback on entries. This creates a pseudo-forum, where approved visitors are able to comment on the person’s experiences. Below Miss Raven discusses how her online interactions differ from offline through the use of blogs on her Myspace page:

I am offline who I am online, but ... I am a lot more open [online].

Dave. Yeah?

M. Yeah with blogs ... like the life story blogs I did on Myspace. I probably wouldn’t sit down one night and spout it out to somebody in the flesh; it was like a book for me. So that was quite good.

D. So what is it about the Net that made it easier to do that? Is it because if someone’s interested they can look?

M. Pretty much and then they can get to know who I am if I meet them online, and then they can decide whether they still wanna meet me in the flesh. And it was therapeutic [laughs] and it was fun to do while I was bored. A big whinge about how bad my life was [laughs].

Over the course of approximately two months Miss Raven wrote a series of blogs that constituted a form of autobiography covering mostly her mid-teens to early twenties. These blogs consisted of highly personal information including details of her children and past romantic relationships. Her blog entries often had feedback posted on them from friends who seemed to follow the entire story: for example, “argh! I need another fix chick, hurry and write the next chapter or I'll be forced to make you tell me tomorrow night at the pub!”. This is a further way of extending the private into the public realm, as blogs such as Miss Raven's often contain deeply personal autobiographical information and recounting of events.

In the discussion of her blogs, Miss Raven describes how posting blog entries are a way of expressing her identity to others. Readers could then decide whether they want to move their interactions to an offline place. In this way blogs function as a form of gate keeping. People post comments concerning the blogs, exchanges that can result in friendships which can then move offline. Miss Raven's blogs and her description of them further highlight the experience of communing across places. In the example of her blog, the creation of personal media involved a complex range of elements that included both online postings and offline interactions. This blog is, as a result, an online place that weaves together Miss Raven's experiences in various offline places. As a way of expressing her interest, Miss Raven's friend threatens that she will ask her about her experiences in the pub, further tying a localised place to this personal media. As a result, the creation of this blog results in another performative place that incorporates both online and offline experiences through further discussion as people commune.

These examples, involving the spanning of online and offline places, demonstrates how users of social networking sites are socially situated, interpreting their online behaviour in relation to their offline everyday lives. The online performative places become part of the fabric of everyday life through routine everyday use (Vrooman, 2002). Routines can involve checking emails regularly in the morning, and in this way quotidian rhythms can be another way of transcending the supposed online/offline divide (Howard et al., 2002). In the interview excerpt below, Chopper, asked how often he accesses Myspace, discusses his everyday use of the Internet:

Oh every day. What I generally do is cos this thing [his computer] takes so long to [start up] I come in, boot it up while I have a shower and by the time I've finished my shower it's all getting ready to login. In between pages I'll go out and have my dinner or muck around, watch a bit of TV or whatever, I've gotta keep doing other stuff cos I don't wanna get into the habit of sitting on my computer six hours a day, uploading Myspace videos or upgrading the Myspace pages or searching for friends or whatever. I really only got onto it cos I had other mates on it, it started that way and then when I got a bit better at it as far as finding things and modifying pages, that's when I did the band's one as well and so yeah in between my own one, and my band's one and the Bebo it takes up more time than I want it to ... it's just a way of keeping up with people without actually ringing 'em, cos cell phones cost ... normally get home [from work] at half past five, by the time I've had a shower its six o'clock, yeah by the time about eight o'clock or so I'm ready to turn it off.

The Internet is part of Chopper's daily routine. With his working class Metaller persona, Chopper is far from the stereotypical socially isolated computer nerd. In his description of his Internet use, he portrays himself as being socially situated within his home, with his friends, and with his band. The Internet is not in this instance socially isolating. Instead, it is integral to the communication Chopper maintains with a variety of groups.

Chopper does, however, try to distance himself somewhat from other computer users. He views his working class persona as being at odds with an Internet user who sits in front of the computer for "six hours a day". Chopper's experience represents a conscious effort to integrate Internet use into his everyday routine while recognising it as not fitting his traditional working class social identity. Chopper notes that he spends approximately two hours online while carrying out other activities, which indicates that it is an important part of his routine and that his online interactions are important to his identity.

Chopper is positioning the computer as a tool to express identity, but is not symbolically utilising it as an aspect of his personal identity. Figure 24 below shows a section of his Bebo site.

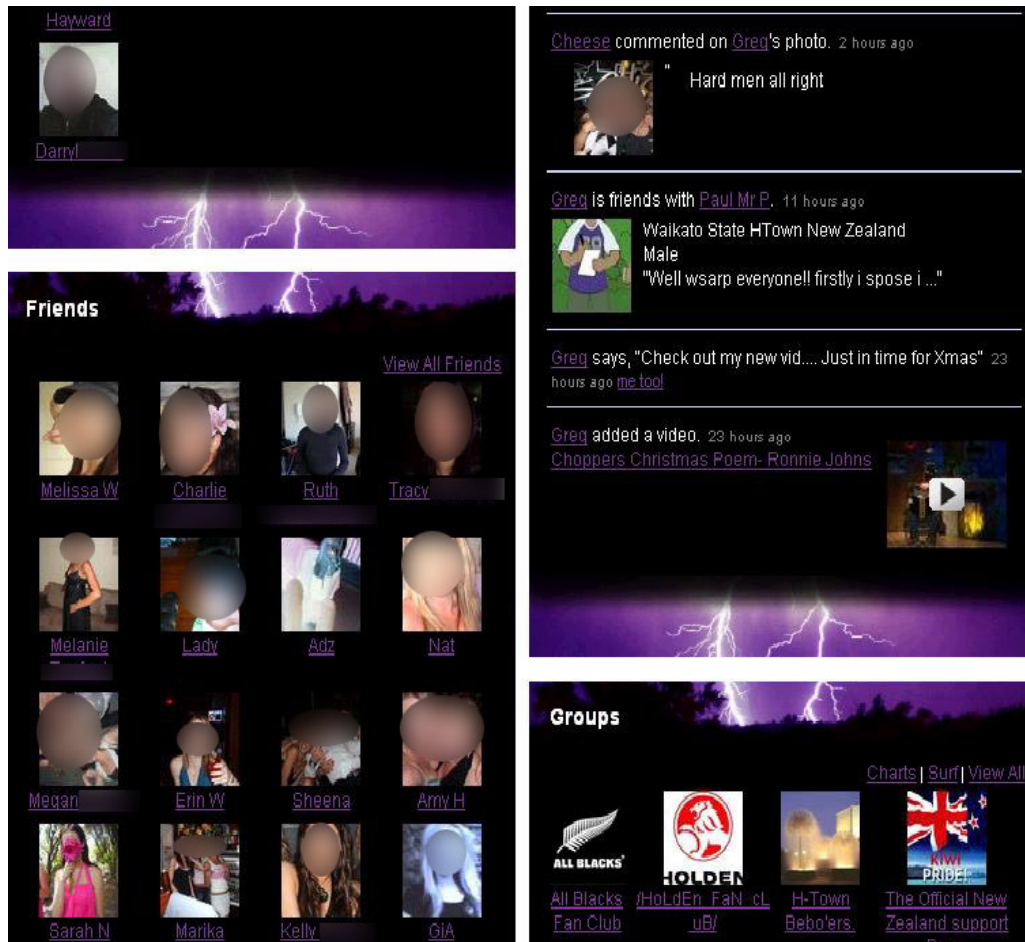


Figure 24. Segment of Chopper's Bebo page

Contained within this portion of Chopper's Bebo page is not only his friends list but also in the top right segment, a record of his most recent online activities, including a comment on a photograph, the creation of a new friendship link, and the posting of a video online. Below this record is a list of fan groups that Chopper belongs to. Together, these represent Chopper's use of his computer as a material object involved in communing across online and offline spaces in its everyday use. Social networking sites become a daily means of extending identity and experiencing community through interacting with others (*cf.* Theberge, 2005). Chopper alternates between online interaction and offline routine. Using the computer is just part of his daily actions and there is no clear demarcation between when he is online and when

he is offline. Instead he moves across the two as he interacts with friends who he has met offline as well as some people he will probably never meet face-to-face. He uses the conventional tools of photographs, comments, and videos in negotiating the self across online and offline sites. Computers in other locations beyond the home and even software on cell phones further enable this type of mobility and integration. People often layer different modes of communication and can move across, between and through the media landscape in their daily lives (Chamberlain & Hodgetts, 2008). This process of movement also includes navigating across both online and offline spaces.

In the future, social psychology researchers could seek to socially situate Internet research within the context of everyday offline life (Wellman & Gulia, 1999). People move across and through both online and offline places in their everyday lives. This occurs through the use of a material object such as a computer by the creation and development of personal media such as images, blogs and status updates on social networking sites. By commenting, discussing, and replicating such personal media, people experience community and commune across these performative places. In this process, users often develop a sense of located-ness in online interactions through referring to other places and other times, further socially situating their interactions (Dixon & Durrheim, 2000).

Chapter discussion

In this chapter, I have developed an understanding of the relationship between people and place. In analysing my participants' experiences my research has demonstrated how people perform identity and community across places. In presenting these places in a diminishing scale, consisting of concerts, bars, homes, and social networking sites I have shown how the imagined community of Heavy Metal is not limited to, or bounded by, specific places since my participants used their membership to this community to foster interactions with other Metallers across a range of locations. As people develop close relationships with others, the places in which these interactions occur also become meaningful. The identities of inhabitants leak out and across these locations, texturing the environment. Communal places

begin to evolve, changing in appearance to reflect the identities that are performed within them (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). This process extends notions of place identity that focus on emotion (e.g., Proshansky et al., 1983). While emotional attachment is important, there is still a physicality to place that plays an important role in the performance of identity and community.

This became particularly evident in concerts. Such a communal event provides a relevant example of the use of imagined communities in the development of identity (*cf.* Anderson, 1991). As a spectacle (Bakhtin [1936] 1984), the concert mosh pit represents a pressing throng, a way to connect with other Metallers in an intense form of community. Moshers bounce off one another, literally and metaphorically connecting with other participants. Architect and Space Ghost elaborated on an immersive atmosphere that is developed through active participation in a place. Concert attendees feel connected to each other and a part of a much larger collective consisting of a shared Metaller identity (Hast, 1993; Tsitsos, 1999). For Metallers, the concert is often considered the epitome of Heavy Metal life. The popularity of material representations of the concert environment, such as the concert T-shirts and ticket stubs that were explored in the previous chapter is indicative of the concert's role in the Metaller community. These objects, along with related practices, provide the means for participants to take this imagined community out into more local environments.

A feeling of connectedness that is established through participation is extended into more routinely experienced places. Identities are mobile and so feelings of community and connection are taken into more localised environments by concert goers (*cf.* Bess et al., 2002; Obst et al., 2002). Participants in this research project discussed bars as the most common example of these localised communities. Patrons of local bars often go there on a weekly basis and so, while not being as routinely experienced as the home, this place still provides a location for more personal relationships to develop (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). People who regularly visited the bar were able to connect with other regulars and, as Misery described, were given the opportunity to establish a sense of family or community. Through regular attendance and interaction, bar patrons develop a sense of "our place" and often develop strong attachments (Proshansky et al., 1983).

Participation in smaller scale concert practices, such as crowd surfing, represents a means of bringing elements of the concert into these smaller locations to develop more personal relationships. Practices such as moshing and crowd surfing allow bar patrons to re-engage with the community atmosphere that is established at concerts. In this way, Heavy Metal music is used by bar patrons to actively re-create a space of experience through participation and involvement (*cf.* Bull, 2004). By replicating concert practices in smaller locations, patrons draw together these two locations. My participants' accounts moved beyond a sense of place as an internal and emotional connection to an incorporation of physical movement through the body (*cf.* Leyshon et al., 1995). Thus, community sites may become meaningful manifestations of the relationships and shared practices that occur within their physical environment (Hodkinson, 2002). Richard Sennett (1998) stated that "community evokes the social and personal dimensions of place. A place becomes a community when people use the pronoun 'we'" (p. 137). It is through regular attendance and physical interactions with other people at a bar, such as Misery's Hysteria, that such a place and its inhabitants become "we" or in her words "like a family".

Localised environments also include more private places such as homes. Filf's example of crowd surfing in the kitchen aside, homes are not usually a place where concert practices are re-enacted with such intense physicality. Instead the imagined community of Metallers leaks out into the home environment through material objects and music production. For example, *Slayer* Fan and Drummer's garage space represents an expression of identity and community through the display of photographs, tickets, and concert posters. Their garage space highlights how identities leak out into surrounding environments through decoration. These objects link them to a wider Metaller community and other important relationships such as familial ties (*cf.* Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). In a similar way to practices, these objects also link *Slayer* Fan and Drummer temporally and spatially to other people and events. A poster of a *Jimi Hendrix* concert several decades ago that *Slayer* Fan's father attended, displayed alongside a *Slayer* concert that she attended with Drummer, links their identities back across time and space through an object. This recognises that identity is not only in the present but is also located in the past.

Further, the imagined community atmosphere of the concert is re-experienced through Drummer's band using the garage as a practice space, as they attempt to improve their musical skills. Additionally, in turning their music appreciation into production, the band provides an example of remembering past concert events. Their cover versions of *Metallica*, *Slayer*, and *Sepultura* songs that they practice in this space re-enact past concerts when these international bands performed. The songs Drummer's band practice will be played at future gigs, and thus are not only a link to the past but also a link to the future. They are an enactment of a future performance of identity at a gig that is yet to be performed. These future spaces of gigs yet to be played are folded into the present space of the garage, representing a complex inter-related network of relationships that extend beyond emotional ties. The space is textured through the combination of: people, practices, material objects, and other times (both past and present) (*cf.* Lewicka, 2008). Through all of this *UTU's* members feel connected to the practice space of the garage. Nevertheless, their place based identity is not limited to internal feelings, but also incorporates elements of the material, spatial, and temporal. The garage space becomes interactional and representational as the place is infused with meaning through interactions and linkages across time and space. The garage is at once a place that represents the identities of the band members and their membership to a Metaller community.

Concepts of interactional spaces are also relevant in discussions of online social networking sites. Much like the private space of the home, Myspace and Bebo pages are developed through performances of identity. Developing a personal profile and posting images online is a way of communicating identity and communal ties to other users (*cf.* Goodings et al., 2007). The pages of social networking sites also frequently contain a large array of personal information through personal media such as blogs (Jenkins, 2006; Luders, 2008). In this way, social networking sites can be viewed as yet another private space.

The creation of this private space, however, is aimed at encouraging interactions with like-minded people. It is a means for the online extension of the offline self, moving the personal into the public. For example, Ripper's information presents his offline identity as an autonomous being free of external influence on to the online webs site. More than this, though, the presentation of identity online is also used to

encourage interactions with others. There would be little point in developing a social networking site and then not connecting with other people. A statement of identity or existence online is relatively meaningless unless it is shared with others more directly through social interaction. Instead, my research participants portrayed a situation in which they were presenting themselves online to not only advertise identity but encourage interactions. Through these experiences their identities further developed, building upon each other (Charon, 1979).

This chapter has examined a range of places, both online and offline, across which my research participants performed identity and experienced community. In particular, the participants in this research project described their use of online sites as being a part of their daily routines. Chopper, for example, provided a particularly relevant instance of how his computer usage was interspersed with everyday activities such as taking a shower or making dinner. Miss Raven regularly used the Internet to communicate but also talked to the local Shell station attendant and made new online friends at offline occasions such as parties. For Chopper and Miss Raven alike, their use of the Internet was situated within the context of their offline, everyday lives (Barkardjieva, 2003; Wellman & Gulia, 1999). Further, their online and offline lives were interwoven as they flicked back and forth between the two realms (*cf.* Livingstone, 2007). This occurred both visually and textually, as photographs were posted and comments are made by viewers of this material. The experiences of my research participants provide examples of Silverstone's (1999) double articulation of space. They do not occupy a symbolic online space that is separate and distinct from the physical, offline space of their homes. Instead they occupy both, as they extend their offline selves online and vice versa.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This study, an examination of Metaller performances of identity and community, was introduced with an autobiographical anecdote, through which I identified a number of issues relevant to the research project. These issues included online and offline interactions involving: identity, media, material objects, and places. I also noted that these processes are often taken-for-granted, as they are a part of routine everyday life and usually go unnoticed unless questioned (Chaney, 2002). In conducting the research, I was frequently forced to consider the nature of my own identity and my relationship to a Metaller community. The daily negotiation of identity and community frames this final chapter. In what follows, I assemble the dominant themes that have emerged from my analysis to demonstrate that identity and community are experienced within and across a variety of places that comprise the setting for everyday life.

I started this study with a particular interest in examining variations in lyrical interpretations of Heavy Metal songs. Built around literature that privileged listeners' personal experiences in the lyrical interpretation of music (e.g., Gunn, 1999; Walser, 1993), I began to investigate how my participants interpreted their favourite songs. The aim was to contest the notion that Heavy Metal's lyrics were limited to clearly identifiable messages that promoted anti-social behaviour (King, 1985). My original research focus was underpinned by my belief that my research would "right" negative stereotypes of Metaller communities. In defending the Metaller community through lyrical analysis I had, however, individualised the experience of music. In this initial engagement with the subject matter, I came to mirror those authors of whom I had previously been critical – scholars who ignored context and community, adopting an individualistic approach to media based research (e.g., King, 1985). Despite acknowledging social factors in lyrical interpretations, I emphasised the music rather than fans' use of music.

Furthermore, my focus on individual responses privileged the personal over the social. Thus, in examining the subjective nature of lyrical interpretations I overlooked the communal function of Heavy Metal music; I neglected the role of music as a resource for identity and the development of relationships (Brooker, 2002; Couldry, 2004). Once I shifted my focus, and centralised the fans rather than the music, I began to develop a more nuanced appreciation of how music is an interest that can be shared and provides opportunities for interactions with others through practices such as dancing (*cf.* Hast, 1993). People can use their personal taste in music to socialise with other people possessing similar tastes (DeNora, 2000). In other words, personal identities provide the basis for the individual to engage with communities (*cf.* Kroger, 1996). Such engagements have an important impact on peoples' sense of self - they seek ways to socialise with others, interactions that further develop their identities (*cf.* James, 1890). In other words, not only is identity used as a means of engaging with communities, but community memberships have an effect on identity (Charon, 1979; Jenkins, 2004; Kaufman, 2000; Noble, 2004).

Personal and social identities are, therefore, intimately linked through reciprocal relationships (Arnou, 1994; Jenkins, 2004). This premise takes scholarly research beyond much of the work in Anglo-American psychology, research in which the relationship between the personal and the social has been defined through dichotomies and difference (Jenkins, 2004). The personal is conceptualised as the isolated body and/or mind that is referred to as an autonomous individual, while the social is explained through notions of society and community (Jenkins, 2004). It has become "natural" within Anglo-American psychology to order such phenomena into opposing categories; for example, the personal and the social, the public and the private (Sedgwick, 2001). These dichotomies are problematic as the poles of personal and social overlap and merge in everyday life - personal identities are necessary elements of communal life, and communal life is necessary for the development of personal identities (Jenkins, 2004).

Findings from this present research project support the view that identity and community are fundamentally emplaced and very physical phenomena, and are not limited to thoughts in heads (Jovchelovitch, 2007). People, for example, participate in practices in order to extend their identities into communities (Chaney, 2002; Kroger, 1996). Similar to the relationship between identity and community, place and practice

are also intimately linked (*cf.* Moore & Miles, 2004). Practices are a way for people to physically manifest their identities and communal ties (Chaney, 2002). Music related activities enable Metallars to share their identities with others in a physical way (Walser, 1993). Through such practices the Metallars social identity can leak into the places within which it is performed (*cf.* Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981).

With a focus on shared activities and the negotiation of identity and community, place then became a central theme of my analysis. I utilised notions of place to examine not only geographical locations in the traditional sense, but also to investigate issues of embodiment and materiality. As my analysis progressed, I developed an increasingly nuanced appreciation of the spatial and temporal intricacies of identity and community. My research participants' accounts were frequently situated within places, as they described concerts attended, bars frequented, and home-life experiences. They also talked about their social networking sites in relation to places, often as a way of tying together offline places as they discussed their concert experiences online with friends. I came to realise that space and time are central to the personal interactions used to develop the personal and social identities of Heavy Metal fans and their Metallars community (*cf.* DeChaine, 2002; Weinstein, 2000). In interviews, my research participants rarely mentioned listening to music privately, and instead frequently discussed interactions with other people that were mediated by Heavy Metal music. In drawing upon concepts from symbolic interactionism I shifted my individualistic perspective to a collectivist view that included notions of place.

My engagement with issues of place moved inward from locations such as concerts, bars and homes, to bodies. The body is a place for the performance of identity and community (Williams & Bendelow, 1998). Bodies and material objects are processes that manifest identity and community visually (Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Garner, 2004). The body is a mobile place, as it moves through other places as people conduct their everyday lives (*cf.* Hodgetts et al., 2010b). In the second section of this concluding chapter, I begin my examination of place in relation to the embodiment of both identity and community, and how these can also be performed through material objects such as clothing. Such bodily and material processes are a way of displaying

identity and community affiliations in or on places (Hurdley, 2006; Williams & Bendelow, 1998).

Social research projects often investigate communities in isolation, with little attention being paid to multiple community memberships (e.g., Tewksbury, 2002). Recognition of relational or interest-based online communities has also not altered the tendency to discuss such groups in isolation. Obst and colleagues' (2002) investigation of science fiction fans, for example, identified the positive and supportive nature of sharing media with others. In order to identify these positives, the authors isolated their chosen community, ignoring interactions that occur with other people in other places. Indeed, it is only through ignoring wider associations and communing that the authors were able to quantitatively measure science fictions fans' "sense of community". An important element of mobility in everyday life is the overlapping nature of place and the consideration of multiple community memberships (Hermans, 2001).

Places can be connected through the physical practices that are performed across such sites, as people rarely interact within only one setting (*cf.* Hannerz, 2003). People mobilise their identities through participating in activities across a range of locations (*cf.* Hodgetts et al., 2010b). Many social researchers with a sophisticated view of place recognise that physical and symbolic spaces, such as the Internet or the body, are frequently connected and overlap (Livingstone, 2007; Silverstone, 1999). By conducting ethnography across sites, and investigating more than simply one concert, or equivalent large scale event, I have been able to draw attention to the means through which the Metaller community interacted across places (*cf.* Hannerz, 2003). In doing so, I was bringing attention to the links between places, as these are important in the studying of communities (Hannerz, 2003). Places are textured through the overlapping of the physical and symbolic, the public and the private, for example through the decoration of places with material objects. These objects can connect places (Hurdley, 2006; Livingstone, 2007): as exemplified in Chapter Four, through decorating their garage space with framed pictures of *Jimi Hendrix* and *Slayer* concerts, Drummer and *Slayer* Fan bring these past events into their practice space to be remembered. This is an example of how people experience their lives, as a series of places that they travel across, linking them

together (Hodgetts et al., 2010b). The process of communing across sites in the experience of everyday life is a significant finding in this research project.

The remainder of this concluding chapter is presented in four sections. The following section, *The inter-related nature of identity and community*, re-examines the reciprocal relationship between identity and community. Next, *The physical and material nature of identity and community*, revisits my examination of place in relation to the embodiment of both identity and community, and how such embodiments can also be performed through the construction and use of material objects such as clothing. The third section, *The interconnected and overlapping fabric of everyday life*, extends the examination of place through a discussion of the interweaving and overlapping nature of places. In particular, my research participants' accounts of navigating across the online/offline "divide" evoked Roger Silverstone's (2004) notion of a double articulation of space (examined in Chapter Four). The final section, *Everyday life: Reflections on bringing it all together*, presents an argument in support of the greater utilisation of ethnographic methods in psychology as a means of building upon current approaches to community research (cf. Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2008).

The inter-related nature of identity and community

The work of William James (1890) identified a distinction between the self-as-knower (*I*) and the self-as-known (*Me*). James (1890) described the *I* as representing personal identities whereby people experienced a sense of continuity over time. This concept of self-recognition acknowledged that there was a core aspect of identity which remained unchanged, and people expressed a sense of agency by choosing whether to accept new information garnered through experience in the development of identity. The *Me* represented social identities and incorporated elements of a person's body, possessions and other people. These distinctions of the *I* and *Me* were exemplified in my research participants' discussions. Chopper, for example, developed a sense of *I* as an individual who chose to incorporate experiences with other people into his sense of self. My participants also identified themselves as

Metallers, a social identity (*Me*) that influenced their appearance, material objects they purchased or appropriated, and people with whom they shared this identity.

This shared social identity brought my research participants together in ongoing interactions centred on the appreciation of Heavy Metal music. Thus, a social identity provided a basis for community (*cf.* McMillan, 1996; *cf.* Walsler, 1993). Through sharing their Metaller identity with other people who had similar aesthetic tastes, participants provided an entry point into a Metaller community. Identities, then, were intimately linked as communities of like-minded people coalesced around shared characteristics, views, or tastes (Ethier & Deaux, 1994). My research participants' accounts illustrated how people commune via joining and engaging with groups in their everyday lives. People, as embodied identities, feel that they belong to a community when interacting and engaging with others (*cf.* Kroger, 1996).

The relationship between identity and community is dialectical, with each influencing the other during the course of ongoing interactions. This dialectical relationship illustrates how personal identities have an element of "social-ness" (Hermans, 2001). Thus, in developing personal identities in everyday life my research participants drew upon the Metaller community (*cf.* Jenkins, 2004). They adopted the norms of the group by drawing upon stylistic themes of power, such as aggressive iconography consisting of pentagrams and skulls. These confrontational symbols were drawn upon to develop personal identities that favoured "personal strength" and the importance of being "true to yourself". Indeed, being perceived as a powerful individual who rebels against the mainstream is central to the identification and function of "community leaders". In the Metaller community such leaders emerge through informal recognition, with popular singers or innovative musicians becoming icons for Metallers (Bostic et al., 2003). "Chosen" community leaders act as role models for the way Metallers see themselves both individually and collectively. Thus, Chopper's identification with *Dimebag Darrell* relies on his admiration for *Darrell's* musical ability and his awareness of the iconic role of *Darrell* within the Metaller community. Such identity work exemplifies the function of Anderson's (1991) imagined community. The imagined community of Heavy Metal fans is made tangible or materialized when people draw upon imagined communities in the construction of their own sense of self (*cf.* Hodgetts et al., 2010a). The personal and the social are interwoven, with each influencing the other – while at the same time having

implications for wider community practices and stylisations (Anderson, 1991; Chaney, 2002; Jenkins, 2004).

Social researchers interested in the nature of identity frequently emphasise the relationship between the public and the private, the personal and the collective (e.g., Jenkins, 2004). Mead (1934), for example, discussed the social self as being in a state of constant development through interactions with others and the individual's interpretations of such events. In his view, the self and society are fluid processes. This approach was later expanded by Goffman (1961), who viewed the self as an active being shaped through a complex network of relationships and interactions. According to Goffman (1961), the self consisted of a number of roles, positions, and performances, as well as the individual's interpretations of these various aspects. More recent scholarly work concerning the self describes aspects of "identity work" as including employment, practices, places, and interactions that emerge from various forms of "action and organisation" (Housely, 2009, p. 73). The relationship between the personal and the social is becoming increasingly blurred as social science research, while still recognising the personal, moves increasingly towards conceptualisations of the self as being layered by multiple social and personal identities so that "a person becomes a shifting ensemble of states that are received and passed on" (Thrift, 2008b, p. 85).

Through the application of these conceptualisations in the present research project, I developed an understanding of how my research participants experienced themselves as both individuals and as members of communities (*cf.* Arnow, 1994). For the research participants, there was a need to belong as part of a group while at the same time maintaining a sense of personal distinctiveness (Jenkins, 2004). Their accounts, particularly those set out in Chapter Three, reflected the use of their community membership in the development of their personal identities. Thus, the study shows that people experience community through engaging with others. The implication is that identity and community are often overlapping entities. My findings support assertions that identity and community are intimately linked via reciprocal relationships and dialectical processes. On the one hand, my research participants shared their Metaller identity with other like-minded people in order to experience community. Their taste in music, along with their identification as a Metaller, provided an interest that they could share with others and as a result feel connected to a

group. On the other hand, their relationships and interactions with other individuals and a wider community resulted in the further development of their identities. In other words, in everyday life people draw upon large-scale imagined communities to construct more personal relationships and connections. These personal connections then result in the further development of identity. In this way people feel that they are members of these large scale communities, while at the same time maintaining a sense of distinctiveness or personal identity (*cf.* Tajfel, 1981).

The present study therefore contributes to existing knowledge by articulating with detailed examples a social view of the self that bridges the personal and the social. Some social researchers (e.g., Hermans, 2001; Jenkins, 2004) have examined the reciprocal nature of identity and community, and have identified the concept of social identity as an important device for understanding both individuals and groups. In utilising the concept of social identity, researchers are able to gain some understanding of external behaviour and internal motivations (Jenkins, 2004). This is a perspective that deserves further investigation, since the internal and the external are intimately linked in a reciprocal relationship. Careful consideration of the material nature of identity and community can lead to significant insights about experiences of everyday life, and this subject is discussed in the next section.

The physical and material nature of identity and community

This study has focused on experiences of community which occurred through interactions between Metallers that involved specific practices, places, events, and objects. Couldry and Curran (2003) explain that recognition of the ways in which groups construct meaning through communal practices can re-shape investigations of community, so that research focuses on community as a process of communing, or something that is “done”, rather than viewing it as a stable object for investigation. The present research project illustrates how communities, instead of being entities out there to be studied (nouns), are processes (verbs). Processes of communing entail the performing and sharing of identities with others, as shown by the ways in which my participants’ accounts reflected interactional and physical aspects of

everyday life (*cf.* Silverstone, 1999). In this section, I draw conclusions about the physical and material nature of a Metaller identity and community.

The physical nature of identity and community was particularly pronounced in the accounts of concerts set out in Chapter Four. Concerts can be conceptualised as manifestations of a large scale, imagined community where moshers feel connected to each other through sharing in the atmosphere. My research participants' accounts of the concerts they attended illustrate how such events are a place to perform identity and community in a physical way through close contact with others. As I argued in Chapter Four, community is something that people need to physically feel a part of, and it was in their physical interactions that my research participants felt they were a part of the community. Through physical practices, community members literally and metaphorically connect with others. Recent research (e.g., Riley et al., 2010) has indicated that in engaging in activities in a space, people develop a sense of belonging and emotional attachment to a community. Through enjoyable experiences that occur in socialising with others, people develop a sense of belonging. The present study supports these findings. By enjoying the music and physically interacting and performing identity via their bodies, Metallers develop a sense of belonging to the community.

As I indicated in the first section of Chapter Four, some social psychologists have discussed crowd behaviour in relation to theories of submergence or de-individuation (e.g., Le Bon, 1895; Festinger et al., 1952; Zimbardo, 1969). Social psychologists' focus on crowd behaviour can be traced back to Gustave Le Bon (1895), who was interested in the destructive nature of crowds. His subjects were rebellious protestors who clashed with the authorities, and his study led to his development of a theory of submergence, where a loss of a sense of individuality allows the expression of instincts that people would otherwise repress. Le Bon's (1895) work heavily influenced future crowd research, particularly Festinger and colleagues' (1952) development of the theory of deindividuation, which also emphasised the individual's loss of identity and agency within the larger group. Another influential scholar in this field was Zimbardo (1969) who identified a number of factors, including anonymity, which contributed to deindividuation. These factors included arousal, sensory overload, novel or unstructured situations, active participation, and the consumption of mind altering substances.

Conceptualisations such as those by Le Bon (1895), Festinger and colleagues (1952), and Zimbardo (1969) focus on the individual, discussing the individual's loss of identity and agency within the larger group rather than investigating a shared social identity in a communal environment. In other words, they focus on the individual in the group rather than the group in the individual, and they particularly emphasise internal motivations for social disruption. Other social psychologists conducting research into crowd behaviour have criticised approaches derived from deindividuation because those approaches remove the context in which the group is situated (Reicher, 1987; Reicher & Potter, 1985), which is the communal environment in which social interactions occur. Lefebvre (1954), for example, has discussed how people within crowds act in ways that are controlled and meaningful. Allport (1924, p. 295) has also stated that "the individual in the crowd behaves just as he would behave alone only more so".

People do not give up control or act out of character due to the anonymity that a group affords, and instead are united in their identities, in this case as Metallers (*cf.* Gruzelić, 2007). A Heavy Metal concert includes all the elements Zimbardo (1969) identified in his further development of deindividuation theory (e.g. arousal, sensory overload, and drug taking), yet individuals look after other members and participants - if a person is knocked down they are helped back up. In this way, people are aware of their identities, implying something more than deindividuation. Rather than being deindividuated participants in the mosh, moshers become almost hyper-aware of their membership and feel that they belong to an intense and powerful community. The mosh pit represents an embodied community as the many became one seething mass. People do not deindividuate and give up their sense of personal identity, as some research has suggested (e.g., Festinger et al., 1952), but rather personal identities and the community are closely linked. My research has shown that Metaller practices such as moshing (or other practices such as displaying tattoos) are not necessarily limited to an internal motivation to be socially disruptive (*cf.* Pitts, 2003) but can also be socially facilitating (*cf.* Snell et al., 2011). Moshers are not socially disruptive if they are in the mosh pit colliding with others; and a tattoo is not disruptive if the person displaying it is surrounded by other tattooed people in an imagined community. These are common practices amongst Metallers and so they only become disruptive when they are in unfamiliar settings (*cf.* Chaney, 2002).

Identity and communing are expressed and made tangible not only through what people do, but also through their possessions. Material objects serve a variety of functions that are important in relation to identity and community (Cullum-Swan & Manning, 1994; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Interactions with others are often mediated through the use of “things”. Peoples’ possessions are a way of displaying their community memberships to others, and are a readily available way of encouraging interactions with others (Cullum-Swan & Manning, 1994). Stylisation is an important part of everyday life, since visual displays represent identity as people move through a variety of different environments and contexts. Identity, for example, can be communicated through the use of material objects used in combination, such as T-shirts and hair-styles (cf. Chaney, 2002). These collections represent the accumulation of being described by Noble (2004), as the different objects that are chosen to display identity represent a mobile photo-album or a snapshot of identity and affiliation at a particular point in time. When people obtain such items and use them regularly, they become routine, and an everyday element of life, and so can be taken-for-granted until they are de-familiarised and made extraordinary again (Chaney, 2002).

Routine interactions involving material objects can be used as a way of advertising community membership, both within and outside the community, in everyday experiences and interactions (Brown, 2007; cf. Cullum-Swan & Manning, 1994). My earlier discussion of the bodyscape in Chapter Three is particularly relevant in the analysis of material objects. Concert goers personalised their experiences of the concert through their choice of stylisation as a means of transferring this event onto the more intimate space of the body. This could be achieved through something as temporary as decorating the body with a concert T-shirt, or more permanently through tattooing. In other words, the body can be decorated or physically altered to reflect not only personal identities but also community affiliations (Te Awekotuku et al., 2007). Through processes of stylisation and appropriation, material objects provide a way of mobilising identity and community.

Given peoples’ need to belong and to be social, particularly among those with whom they share common interests and community memberships, material objects help communicate these interests to encourage interactions (Hurdley, 2004; Mezirow, 2000). Material objects provide an opportunity for someone to say “nice shirt” and

start a conversation that can lead to a fleeting sense of belonging, a friendship, or a long-term relationship. Those within the community recognise the owner of such material objects as “one of us”, and so these objects provide opportunities to engage and share interests with like-minded others, and in the process experience community (Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). Material objects also provide an opportunity to interact with those outside the community, since they are a means of differentiating one’s group from another. Confrontational symbols displayed on material objects, such as demons, are a way of defining identity and community in contrast to other groups (Brown, 2007; Walser, 1993). This is perhaps particularly the case with communities such as Heavy Metal, which to some extent enjoys its marginal positioning – wearing it as a “badge of honour” (Weinstein, 2000, p. 271).

The role of social interaction in relation to material objects implies that people do not necessarily always interact with objects alone, but that they can also have communal experiences of objects. Further extending Anderson’s (1991) concept of the imagined community, it is not only through practices but also through material objects that imagined communities leak out into everyday life. Concert T-shirts are a means of taking a person’s community membership with attendees out into other environments (Cullum-Swan & Manning, 1994). Inter-group processes that are manifested in material objects further highlight the social nature of possessions, illustrating something more than the communication of identities. Socially disruptive symbolism, such as skulls and crosses, are a way of communicating identity in order to convey difference and establish social distance (*cf.* Brewer, 1999). Such processes of differentiation are common amongst communities, as distinctions between “us” and “them” can be used to justify membership to a particular group (Adler & Adler, 1995; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Material objects can be a physical manifestation of these processes of othering, a means of establishing and communicating a sense of difference (*cf.* Brown, 2007).

By emphasising physicality and materiality, I am not excluding online interactions, nor am I positioning web sites as a separate realm. After all, computers are material objects that are situated in physical spaces such as the home (Livingstone, 2007). In a similar way to their use of material objects, when my research participants posted on social networking sites they sought reaffirmation of their identity and memberships from other users in the form of positive (or negative) comments in

response to certain images or blogs. Postings such as photographs provide a way for people to interact with each other by being focal points for discussion and interaction (*cf.* Hodgetts et al., 2007; Snell & Hodgetts, 2007). In this case, postings are also used to encourage interaction as a way of sharing identity with others in order to experience community. Because of this, careful attention is paid to ensuring that the identity conveyed online is perceived by the user to be accurate (Goodings et al., 2007).

As well as interacting online, people may use social networking sites to remember offline experiences such as a concert in their online interactions. While this will be discussed further in the next section of this chapter, it is important to mention the process here as it illustrates an attempt to re-experience the physical in a virtual environment, a matter examined in Chapter Four in relation to a sense of locatedness. This is a means of re-experiencing physical encounters in an online space, where current technology in the home is unable to reproduce sensations of touch, smell and motion. Instead of directly re-experiencing these sensations, users post comments and images that represent the poly-sensual environment of everyday life. Users of social networking sites discuss a range of physical sensations online, from the extraordinary to the mundane. They post pictures of an amazing concert and discuss the sweaty mass of mosh pits. Mundane experiences can also be discussed online, such as a status update telling other Myspace friends what dinner tasted like. These postings, particularly photographs of concerts, can metonymically represent physical experiences online.

In this section, I have discussed identity and community as inter-related processes, and have examined how these processes are physically manifested through practices and material objects. Identity and community are experienced in everyday life as physical things (Jovchelovitch, 2007). Large scale events become a way to become physically involved in the community through performing identity with others. Such performances can be very physical in nature, incorporating sensual experiences of sights, sounds, smells, and being in close physical contact with others (DeChaine, 2002). The posting of images online is an attempt to bring this physicality to the virtual.

The interconnected and overlapping fabric of everyday life

If identity and community are performances and are things people do, then they need to occur somewhere (Musolf, 2003). My revisiting of the concert in the previous section, for example, illustrated how concerts comprise an interactional event that is created through interactions attendees have with each other and with the show. The concert is an example of how communal places are not empty containers for social action (*cf.* Stokols, 1990). People give meaning to place as their personal and social identities leak out into the surrounding environment (Lefebvre, 2000; Leyshon et al., 1995), as they texture the places in which they interact, for example through decorating with material objects such as posters (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Throughout my analysis, I have examined a range of places textured by Metaller selves. Such places have included the body, concerts, bars, homes, and social networking sites.

Places are an integral part of identity expression and communal life. Geographical and environmental psychology literature (e.g., Korpela, 1989; Lewicka, 2008) contain lengthy discussions of the relationship between people and place via the concept of place attachment. Trentelman (2009) identified three important strands within place scholarship: those that are interested in the social and interactional dimensions of place (e.g., emphasising community attachment), those interested in the physical elements of place (e.g., emphasising the setting as a container for activities), and those who attempt to integrate the two previous strands by acknowledging the role of both the social and the physical attributes of a place. Those in the first instance focus primarily on the emotional attachment between people and place that is created through interacting with other community members (*cf.* Charleston, 2009), while those in the second instance place emphasis on the feelings that are generated by inhabitants towards the physical setting (Proshansky et al., 1983) and how the place provides a setting where the inhabitants can successfully use it for their intended purposes (Schreyer et al., 1981).

With its emphasis on the physical and material nature of identity and community within and across places, this research project is situated within the third strand of place scholarship. Through focussing on how place attachment is not limited to

emotion or to the physical setting as a mere backdrop, the research project has shown how my research participants developed connections to places through engaging in music related practices. This resulted in the development of a connection between themselves and the place. Further, these communal sites are also physical manifestations of identity and community, and such places provide insights into the identities of their inhabitants. The structuring of my analysis according to place enabled me to investigate how my participants performed identity and engaged with their community in relation to places and settings.

People perform identity and community in everyday life not only within but also across a variety of places (*cf.* Hodgetts et al., 2010b). My examination of the concert extends Anderson's (1991) concept of the imagined community, illustrating how it is carried across places and used as a tool for communing. For example, the interactional place of the concert is recreated in a more localised sense amongst smaller groups who have perhaps a more tangible connection. My research participants drew upon their membership to an imagined community and used it to create more personal connections through interacting with others in smaller environments. They attempted to recreate the concert through engaging in common practices in smaller environments, and in doing so they feel connected to something much larger than ten people dancing in a bar (*cf.* Hast, 1993). Misery disclosed her close relationship to the bar Hysteria and the ability to enact a social identity with others. Her experiences there represented bringing the intense form of community in at a concert to a more localised place, recreating an event of thousands of people in order to re-experience and reconnect with a community.

People not only perform one identity across many places (Hannerz, 2003), they also perform other identities across places as they conduct their daily lives. The self consists of multiple identities that shift in emphasis and meaning across different places, a process that has been referred to as the dialogical self (*cf.* Hermans, 2001). My use of this concept explained the performances of various, and often contradictory, identities by my research participants. For example, Death's sense of self incorporated both his social identity as a Metaller and his position at the bank where he worked. He did not consider himself simply a bank employee and not a Metaller while at work. Instead, he negotiated and combined these identities as he travelled in his car from his home to his work. Death did not stop listening to Heavy

Metal music while driving to the bank, and he also revealed that he wears a Heavy Metal T-Shirt under his suit. This illustrates how the negotiation of identity and community are located across places, times, events, and objects (*cf.* Hurdley, 2006; *cf.* Noble, 2004).

The negotiation and performance of identity and community across places draws these locations together. For example, as I have examined in Chapter Three, material objects not only link people to places but may also draw these locations together. My examination of souvenirs illustrated how these objects can be collected and displayed in the home (*cf.* Morgan & Pritchard, 2005), so that they bring publicly experienced places into the private place of the home, and in the process complicate distinctions between public and private (Rechavi, 2009). The display of a concert ticket in the home can bring the public event into the home, connecting these two places (*cf.* Hurdley, 2006). Everyday life, therefore, consists of a series of places across which people perform identity and community (*cf.* Hodgetts et al., 2010b). In the process, people link both public and private places together through engaging in practices and collecting souvenirs (*cf.* Morgan & Pritchard, 2005).

The drawing together of places was also evident in my discussion of social networking sites. These interactional places contain information and performances of identity that brought the offline realm into the online realm (*cf.* Goodings et al., 2007; *cf.* Howard et al., 2002). The Internet is not simply a tool for entering a virtual world; it is part of everyday life and an additional space for people to interact and experience community. For example, in serving to bring physicality to online interactions, the posting of images and photographs connects the offline place of the concert to the online place of the social networking site. These photographs not only connect places, but also represent an overlapping of place, exemplifying Silverstone's (1999) concept of a double articulation of space. The offline spaces portrayed in images are folded into online sites, which can then be brought back into offline sites through face-to-face discussions. The photographs can then be further discussed in the offline realm, reminiscing about the concert, as well as making jokes about embarrassing photographs being posted on social networking sites. In other words, online and offline sites are part of a cyclical process, where users switch between online and offline, public and private. Social networking sites, therefore, are

a way of living in both the online and offline world (*cf.* Mitra & Schwartz, 2001). This has been a key finding of this thesis – both offline and online places provide opportunities for communing through interaction and participation.

Community psychology has frequently referred to the concept of boundaries in order to explain how groups differentiate from each other. Community researchers use the notion of boundaries to discuss inter-group relationships, a way to separate in-groups and out-groups and to separate group members into distinct categories (e.g., McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Perhaps this is because contained groupings are easier to research and to measure. If the group participating in the research is distinct from other groups they can be more readily analysed. However, as this section has shown, life is more complex than rigid boundaries and formally negotiating entry into a community. People move across, between, and through various places (*cf.* Hodgetts et al., 2010b). They emphasise and de-emphasise various identities within the self as they do so (Hermans et al., 1992). With this in mind, the concept of boundaries is far too limiting, restricting participant movements and negotiations in their everyday lives. Discussions of boundaries impose a concept on research participants that is far removed from their actual experiences. The notion of thresholds that I introduced in Chapter 3 requires further investigation as it more accurately reflects how people live their lives. Thresholds can be crossed and negotiated relatively seamlessly as people adapt to their environment through altering their appearances or by participating in other practices.

A sense of connectedness and layering of space evokes a humanistic view of the world, as places, people, and material objects are interwoven in the experience of everyday life. Peoples' life worlds consist of a series of online and offline places that are linked together through their performances of identity and community. The fabric of everyday life is constructed through this interconnected and overlapping network of places. This study has shown how a community constructs "ways of being" through the weaving together of practices, objects and places. (*cf.* Couldry & Curran, 2003). Such locations are linked to their inhabitants, as these places become textured via practices and objects (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Leyshon et al., 1995). Elements of place, practices, and objects are not only ways for communities to extra-textually inhabit their world (Bukatman, 1998), but also a means for people to construct their life worlds (*cf.* Luders, 2004). Through exploring

in more depth the way people negotiate multiple identities across multiple contexts, this study has shown that identity and community are not abstract and mutually exclusive concepts but are experienced as processes that are connected in complex ways.

Everyday life: Reflections on bringing it all together

This concluding chapter has analysed the complex network of relationships that constitute everyday life, spanning people, places, and things. At the beginning of this thesis, I suggested that the successful examination of these elements required a research approach that embraced theories from outside of psychology. My engagement with academic disciplines such as media studies, geography, and sociology, facilitated the inclusion of valuable insights on the nature of place, identity, and community. By utilising concepts from outside psychology, I have been able to provide a holistic study of a community, thus moving beyond the conceptualisation of community as a disconnected, isolated entity. In conducting an auto-ethnography, I collected a set of data that was able to include places and times through sustained interactions with my participants. I aimed in my investigation of the Heavy Metal community to build upon current scholarly thinking by providing further insights into the function of identity and community in everyday life. Using a multidisciplinary approach allowed me to critically analyse the empirical material and, in doing so, I was able to co-construct this research with my participants.

Everyday life is messy (Kincheloe, 2001) and, if people are connected to other people, places, and things, then investigating these various threads is a complex and time consuming process. Symbolic interactionism provided a useful tool for me to examine the various aspects of everyday life that are recognizable to psychologists, geographers, media theorists, and sociologists. As explained in Chapter Two, symbolic interactionism emphasises the idea that “behaviour is a response to specific contexts as the actor interprets these contexts” (Gusfield, 2003, p. 123). Such an approach places particular emphasis on how people interpret these interactions in the construction of meaning (Blumer, 1969). The work of early

symbolic interactionists provided insights that were particularly useful during this study (e.g., Blumer, 1969; Cooley, 1964; Dewey, 1922; Mead, 1934).

A criticism of symbolic interactionism is that it provides too great a focus on the micro level of interactions and overlooks differences in power and structural inequalities (Meltzer et al., 1975). My research participants' use of material objects, such as Heavy Metal T-Shirts, and the frequency with which they attended concerts, reflected a certain level of affluence. They had the disposable income with which to purchase these items, and while they frequently had to save money well in advance to purchase such items, their ability to do so reflected a higher socio-economic status than those who are dealing with circumstances of poverty. My own membership to the Metaller community made acknowledging this situation a difficult task. Nevertheless, despite my personal affiliation with working class culture, I am also economically advantaged. My Metaller identity made me reluctant to admit this, as I did not want to offend my research participants, and because this was a community I was returning to, or remaining within, after the completion of the project. I needed to maintain my community membership both during the study and after its conclusion, not only to be more accountable to my participants (Drew, 2006), but also for the sake of my future personal interactions with the Metaller community, which I felt was a core part of my own sense of self.

While my research participants displayed a certain level of affluence in their ability to purchase material goods, this does not make them passive consumers. Cultural theorists such as John Fiske (1993) have identified a sense of agency in the ways in which people use material objects. In his view, purchasers of material goods are creative in relation to the uses that they develop for material goods as they creatively appropriate, redefine, and use the products of capitalism, turning them into sub-cultural capital and communal artefacts. He further (1993) stated that:

consumers subvert, evade or oppose the dominant to the extent that the power can be made to appear relatively ineffective, or, at least, effective only when those it is attempting to subject consent to their subjection and comply with its discipline (p. 21.).

Similarly, symbolic interactionists attempt to address the criticism that they ignore dominant power structures by investigating how such structures are replicated locally, and by positioning social and cultural forces as mediating influences that can

be examined for how people interpret them and assign meaning (Musolf, 1992). This study has incorporated such notions, since, for example, by investigating material aspects of a Metaller community, I have shown how capitalist structures are replicated in everyday interactions that revolve around items such as T-shirts. Incorporating notions of appropriation facilitated investigations of how these power structures can be manipulated to construct alternate interpretations and meanings (*cf.* Denzin, 1989b). My research participants rejected capitalism as a part of the mainstream, while simultaneously consuming products produced by this system. They have, in this way, developed an alternative reading of capitalist structures, either by seeing manufacturers as a “necessary evil”, or by ignoring their consumption contradictions. While there are no easy answers, identifying such contradictions in my participants’ accounts provided some insight into their everyday lives and identities. For example, their symbolic rejection of mainstream consumerism is a part of a Metaller social identity, yet in actuality they purchase and consume these items and in the process support these structures. As Fiske (1993, p. 21) stated, “Agency is making do with what one has”: in this case, capitalist structures are necessary for the Metaller community, but this does not imply that Metallers have to perceive these capitalist structures favourably.

Drawing upon knowledge from a range of disciplines contributed to the investigation of context and the exploration of my research participants’ interactions and interpretations. The implication of this for psychological research is that researchers need to become social scientists in a broader sense. Knowledge from other disciplines provides valuable explanations that can be drawn upon in the investigation of research participants’ life worlds. Chapter Two indicated the need to consider context, sustained interaction, and multiple perspectives in research such as the present project. With scholars continuing to place emphasis on research participants’ contexts (e.g., Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2008), social researchers should be bricoleurs, bringing multiple perspectives into social analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Interestingly, this broad approach to research has a long history in the social sciences. Symbolic interactionism has its origins in the 1960s, while the scholarly work of William James dates to the 1890s. Sadly Anglo-American psychology, which globally dominates the discipline of psychology, has become distracted by an

emphasis on laboratory experiments and the “certainties” of replication and construct validity (*cf.* Gergen, 1973). There is much to be gained if the discipline of psychology returns to its roots and puts the social back into social psychology. In drawing upon the research of scholars such as James (1890) and Dewey (1969), this thesis echoes the call of other social researchers to return to older ways of investigating social phenomena (e.g., Jenkins, 2004). Older conceptualisations of identity, community, and everyday life can account for the messiness of everyday life.

A return to interactionism would usefully be complemented by employing methodological approaches that allow for prolonged engagements with participants (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2008). In order to understand everyday life, researchers need to engage with it. My membership to the Metaller community was central to my intimate engagement with my research participants. Being a member of the community with which you are conducting research enables nuanced insights and a more insightful account of a community than can be achieved when trying to maintain academic objectivity. My experiences in auto-ethnography in the present study highlight the value for psychology research in replacing a prescribed approach with a flexible and context aware research method. Flexibility is important in ethnographic research, particularly as users of ethnographic methodologies shift toward the investigation of multiple sites for communing (e.g., Hannerz, 2003).

Active engagement is not always easy, however, and I frequently found myself juggling a number of roles. It was often difficult, for instance, to decide at what point to put down the camera or notebook and participate in activities. Such “balancing acts” are also experienced by outsider researchers (Hodkinson, 2005), and so the line between researcher and researched is frequently blurred. My experiences with the media coverage concerning this study and the associated scholarship funding, outlined in Chapter One, further emphasised how intimately linked I was to the research subject: criticism and support for the project brought into focus and heightened issues of positioning. Communal ties between my research participants and I were used by critics as a way of challenging my research topic and my academic credibility.

A common criticism of my research has been that Heavy Metal is a large part of my sense of self and something I experience and engage with in my everyday life as a Metaller. My membership to the community I was studying did mean that I was able to look around and analyse what I was participating in, even though this was sometimes a difficult process. For example, many of the specific processes and practices discussed within this thesis have been things that I have taken-for-granted for a number of years. Often my membership to this community meant it was difficult for me to articulate or analyse in-depth some of the most important concepts utilised in the study – particularly discussions about the “bigger picture” of ethnography, symbolic interactionism, multi-disciplinary research, and community. Outsider supervision has been one of the ways in which I have attempted to counter or negotiate this tension, and this has assisted in the success of this project. While the thesis has often been a frustrating endeavour, since I have had to frequently challenge my own “way of being”, such struggles have added further depth to the research.

The present research project points to ways in which other studies of identity and community may be developed. In particular, there is value in further investigating the pluralistic nature of identity and community. In addition, communities can also consist of a number of smaller groups (Sarason, 1974). For example, the sub-genres of Heavy Metal that were identified in the second section of the Introduction chapter could be the subject of other studies. While the use of the umbrella term of Metaller has been profitable in the present study, future research could benefit understandings of pluralistic identities via an investigation of the intra-group relationships evident in multiple sub-genres. Such smaller groupings can contain variations of Metaller stylisations and the use of the constructed mainstream (*cf.* Walser, 1993). This adds a further layer of complexity when examining the negotiation of multiple identities across places, as each sub-genre places a variety of demands on those Metaller who listen to a range of Heavy Metal sub-genres. While I make these comments about smaller groupings in relation to the Metaller community, the possibility of gaining understandings of pluralistic identities could be applied to other communities, and not simply Metaller.

In the third paragraph of the Introduction to this thesis, I set out three aims for this project, and these have been addressed through the presentation of data, and through critical discussions of possible theoretical approaches. The thesis has explored in detail, first, the ways in which social identities are negotiated and expressed in the day-to-day lives of thirteen Heavy Metal fans. It has, secondly, carefully documented the ways in which social ties are negotiated and maintained across both online and offline sites for community. The thesis has also met its third aim in providing a comprehensive understanding of community life in contemporary New Zealand society by analysing the experiences and practices of Heavy Metal fans. To reiterate my use of Kincheloe's (2001) observation at the beginning of this section, everyday life is messy. As a result, everyday life is a complex area of investigation, particularly when documenting music related practices - reflected in *Elvis Costello's* statement that "writing about music is like dancing about architecture". The present research project has demonstrated how social researchers can deal with this messiness, and can account for the complex nature of everyday life.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW THEMES

Musical Interests: When did you start listening to Metal? Favourite bands?

Identity: Do you use consider yourself a Bogan? If not, what label (if any) would you use? How large a part does Heavy Metal play in your identity? What reactions do you get to your identity? Is there anything about you that you feel people might not think is Metal? Are there any situations where your Metal identity is de-emphasised?

Community values/practices: Is Heavy Metal a community? What do you feel are the everyday beliefs and practices of Heavy Metallers?

Material Culture: How is this expressed? Objects that represent this: E.g. T-shirts, Concert tickets, Stickers, Posters, CDs

Community Sites: What places/sites are important in relation to your 'Metal identity' or in terms of displaying the things discussed earlier? What do they look like?

Online/Offline: Is who you are online different to who you are offline? How do you use Myspace (or any other 'online communities')? E.g. advertise gigs, keep in touch with friends.

APPENDIX B: INTRODUCTION LETTER

Dave Snell
Phone: XXX
Email: XXX

Dear XXXXX:

Hello, my name is Dave Snell. I am a student at the University of Waikato studying for my Doctorate in Heavy Metal. The aim of my research is to explore the ways in which the Heavy Metal community's beliefs, values, rituals and identities are formed and expressed both online and offline. Through this I am hoping to address some of the negative stereotypes that are out there in society in order to paint a more accurate picture of who we are and what we do.

In order to successfully complete this project, I am requesting your participation. I would like to interview you to get your views on Heavy Metal and share some of your experiences with the music, online websites and how you express who you are in your everyday life.

In order to do this, I am hoping to talk to you about some of your experiences and thoughts about Heavy Metal. How long this interview takes is entirely up to you, but will probably take about an hour. This interview will be held wherever is most comfortable for you. Also if you have a Myspace page I would like to discuss your page; for instance, why you chose to post certain pictures or music on there. Then I would like for you to take photos of things you consider important in relation to Heavy Metal. This can include at your home, at parties, photographs of favourite posters or T-shirts or whatever else you consider relevant. If you do not have access to a digital camera then I will be able to give you a disposable camera. After these are developed, I would like to have a second discussion about the photographs and anything else that you want to talk about that may have been overlooked the first

time. This interview again will probably take about an hour, but with no set time limit, and be at a convenient place for you. A copy of the photographs you took will be given to you if you wish.

It is entirely up to you as to what aspect you participate in, and how much information you give. Your responses are confidential and your name will remain confidential at all times. Your name will not be used in any report – a nickname/alias will ideally be chosen by you. Any faces in the photos used in the final copy of my thesis will be blurred. You will also have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage, for any reason and without penalty or prejudice.

A copy of the findings will be made available to you. Also if people want, a summary report of the findings will be produced specifically for those who participated.

If you are interested in participating, or have any questions regarding this project, the best way to contact me is via email, XXX. Alternatively, I can be reached by telephone on XXX or you can phone/text me on XXX.

This study is part of my Doctoral thesis at the University of Waikato, which is being supervised by Professor Darrin Hodgetts and Dr Colin McLeay from the University's Psychology and Geography Departments respectively. Should you have any concerns regarding this study at any time please contact either of these two people: Prof. Hodgetts on XXX or Dr McLeay on XXX

Please find a copy of the interview themes and a consent form with this document.

Thanks for your help

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Snell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dave Snell

Masters of Social Science (Psychology)

Psychology Department, University of Waikato

Hamilton

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

University of Waikato
Psychology Department
CONSENT FORM

PARTICIPANT'S COPY

Research Project: The Everyday Bogans: Identity & Community amongst Heavy Metal fans

Name of Researcher: Dave Snell

Name of Supervisors: Prof. Darrin Hodgetts & Dr Colin McLeay

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee.

Participant's

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____