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CONSUMPTION, YOUTH AND NEW MEDIA:
THE DEBATE ON SOCIAL ISSUES IN BRAZIL

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The story that took me to the present dissertation is a sign of our postmodernity. The rise of information and communication technologies (ICTs) brought closeness to people around the world, and provided the means for my story since the very beginning. It all started in 2002 when I was doing research about consumption and youth in the Internet, and after a long search I found exactly what I was looking for in a place very far from where I was. Modern technological resources allowed me to contact, in a very easy way, people from the research institute (Finnish Youth Research Institute) in Finland. After a second try, I finally heard from the researcher, Professor Terhi-Anna Wilska. She, then, suggested me to replicate her research in my own country but as I did not have an affiliation with any local university, I knew that if I wanted to pursue that track I would have to do that by myself. I decided to face that challenge - she sent me the research survey questionnaire, which I translated into Portuguese. Things were taking shape. After months of negotiation with schools I set up all dates to start the work: February and March 2003.

In that same year of 2003 I landed in Finland; first in Helsinki and then in Seili for a seminar where I had to opportunity to present my findings. It was very rewarding to hear the positive comments from the group of students there. The following year (2004) that group of students I had met in Seili came to Rio de Janeiro for a conference, and I could show them a little bit of the city. At that occasion, Professor Timo Toivonen invited me to join the graduate program at TSE, and I accepted. So, in May 2005 I was back in Turku again for a course and soon after I received the confirmation of my admittance. That's how everything started; it was not easy, I confess. It was actually a long and rocky road - courses, conferences and especially the publication of manuscripts - sometimes difficult and frustrating - especially in regard to academic journals process. On the other hand, I had the pleasure of being part of the TSE family, although in a long-distance studying mode, with sporadic visits for a seminar. Anyway, here I am.

I want to thank all my former colleagues whom I met in different occasions during seminars, and who have discussed my work always providing constructive comments. I also wish to express my gratitude to Professor Timo Toivonen and especially to Professor Terhi-Anna Wilska for welcoming me into the Economic Sociology Graduate Program at TSE. Terhi-Anna was the main responsible for my trajectory at the department, familiarising me with courses and even encouraging me to publish my first article at the TSE Series. Her criticisms were always so positive and optimistic even when I felt more pessimistic about my studies - my sincere appreciation.

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1 INTRODUCTION

"Along with social change, there is continuity. Human social institutions...adapt to change...A challenge of sociology is to understand and predict both change and its absence" (Kornblum 2008, xix)

1.1 The study: Theoretical arguments

This dissertation attempts to explain the complex dimensions of consumption and its related issues - what does it mean to be young in a fast-paced, pluralistic, globalised, and changing society alongside the pervasiveness of new media technologies in the fabric of society. However, a comprehensive analysis of multifaceted topics is beyond the scope of the present dissertation, so I will therefore concentrate on the main aspects of the issues. The main goal of the study since the very beginning was to discuss the social, economic, and cultural aspects of consumption through a historical and sociological perspective, in contemporary society, and within the Brazilian context.

In this introduction (section 1.1) I present a broad discussion centred on issues of modernity and postmodernity, on views of consumption, and on the youth question, which will be handled in a more thorough way in the remaining sections (2 and 3). Following that, I introduce the objective and the research questions that guide the study, the structure of the dissertation - four published papers constitute its core - and the methodology and data with the purpose of better understanding the development of the study. Secondly, (section 2) I will focus on classical views of consumption, on the emergence of youth consumer culture as well as on the dramatic technological transformations emerging from the advent of the mobile phone and the Internet, which the late twentieth century has witnessed.

Then, in the following section (3), I will provide an overview of the relevant social, economic and educational issues regarding the Brazilian paradigm - the question of class that is directly associated with education and income distribution, the emergence of a so-called new middle class over the last few years according to some sectors of society, the impacts of globalisation, and the increasing demands for education - particularly in regard to youth. In conclusion, (section 4) I will present the main results, the theoretical implications of the study, its limitations and future research prospects.

To begin the theoretical discussion I should point out some of the essential features of what some theorists call late modernity, and some others call, postmodernity. For example, as Luhmann (1998, 3) writes, "the characteristics of today's modernity are not those of yesterday and not those of tomorrow and in this lies modernity". Giddens (1991, 1) also points out the main differences characterising modern institutions in comparison to earlier ones, highlighting their dynamism, the weakening of old traditions and their impact on the world. The notion of modernity implies a vital element in this - that all things can be "speeded up, dissolved, displaced, transformed, reshaped". This move, which is both cultural and material, is the actual move towards modernity since it involves a new concept of life in the social sphere (Hall 2004, 17). But it is a capitalist economic order that opens up the way for the evolution of modernity as Giddens and Pierson (1998, 96) argue. On the other hand, Lyotard (1984, 79) claims that postmodernism is modernism in its emerging and continuous condition, although it is essential to concentrate on the structure and subject matter of what is called postmodern - "the experiences, sensibilities and practices" (Featherstone 1992, 266).

Rattansi and Phoenix's arguments (1997, 122–124) form the initial discussion on modernity/postmodernity with continuity and articulate the ideas built into this study. The authors mention that in most developed economies this period shifts from an industrial to a post-industrial era, causing a decrease in heavy industrial processes and promoting an increase in service and financial sectors. The change in production processes also entails a social change translated into new class structure, as well as new power structures among workers. In late modernity/postmodernity, as the authors remark, the level of complexity and continuous change is intensified in comparison to that of the previous period (capitalist modernity), as a consequence of widespread modern technological advances and changes in the social framework of consumer societies, leading to a rupture with former patterns of life and traditions. However, a break with older practices in a context characterised by new consumption values can offer opportunities for the production of new lifestyles. The authors further argue that the emerging era of late modernity produces new types of globalisation translated into cultural influences ("re-culturalizing") and reforms ("restructuring"), which bring about both instability in regard to identity disintegration process and prospects towards new identity construction.

Although many theorists regard consumption as the fundamental aspect of contemporary society (cf Edwards 2000; Baudrillard 1998; Corrigan 1997; Campbell 1995; McCracken 1990), it had already been described in many different ways in the economic discourse of the eighteenth century onwards; e.g., as essential to maintain social position (Veblen 1962[1899]), in relation to the

notion of production (Falk 1994) or a means of social control (Adorno & Horkheimer 1973). According to Campbell (1995, 203, 206), the concept of consumption has changed across time and space. While in traditional societies consumption was intended to fulfil human needs and had a preoccupation with the senses, in modernity or in the modern hedonism, as the author calls it, it changes to a more idealistic or romantic gratification of wishes - the notion of pleasure as a way of life (Bell 1978, 23).

But while consumption is regarded as an essential and multifaceted element of contemporary society, sociological theory has only recently acknowledged this phenomenon; although in 1900, Georg Simmel (1990[1900]) had already recognised the role of consumption and exchange in modernity. Before the 1980's, sociological thought focused on the negative sides of consumption as poverty in market societies (Gronow & Warde 2001, 1) or consumption versus production. Additionally, other issues started to lead the sociological analysis of consumption in the 1980's: the commodification of services provided by the state and the household up to that time (Warde 1996, 303), the consequences of the spread of consumer culture; namely, the combination of the material and the symbolic (Lury 1996), the display of status and class (Gronow & Warde 2001), taste, style, fashion and so on (Sulkunen 1997) and postmodernity (Bocock 2001).

Just as it took time for sociology to realise the importance of consumption as a phenomenon of contemporary societies that needed to be studied, the same thing happened in relation to the sociology of youth towards its object of study; the investigation of this particular group of people is not recent, but has all been conditional upon how youth is defined (Frith 1986, according to Wyn & White 1997, 18). Throughout the late nineteenth century, and in the first part of the twentieth century, working class youth were seen as problematic and as indicators of concern for the community (Finch 1993, according to Wyn & White 1997, 14); and since that time, research has generally been done that takes youth into account as a distinct category or non-adults (Wyn & White 1997, 8). In the late 1980's, the sociology of youth still needed to formulate a concept that encompassed not only young people's transitions into adulthood, but their unique social experiences as well (Jones 1988). As Evans and Furlong (1997, 17) remark, "historically, youth has been portrayed as a site of secondary socialization during which young people develop clearer ideas of their future position in the social order". However, traditionally, the sociology of youth has focused either on disadvantaged youth (Miles 2000) or on youth cultures and sub-cultures (Willis 1977).

However, the nature of youth has changed across time and cultures since it is not a fixed period in life, (Osgerby 1998; Jones 1988) but a "plethora of transitional transitions" as Miles (2000, 11) indicates and, due to many changes that have taken place since the 1970's, the youth were "constructed as a social

category" shaped by social institutions regardless of young people's diverse experiences in terms of age, maturity, gender, class, and education (Fornäs 1995, 3; Wallace & Cross 1990, 1). Even so, a definite approach towards the study of youth as a category ignores the links between past, present and future. In the ultimate analysis, young people's different views, priorities and options are also determined by the diverse conditions in which they grow up and, ultimately, are affected by issues of wealth and poverty in contemporary societies. (Wyn & White 1997, 13.). In this context, homogeneity does not characterise youth as a social group, (Wyn & White 1997; Jones 1988) whilst "diversity" does, as several different aspects are involved and distinguish this social group; actually, "youth is socially divided in terms of young people's interests, social roots, perspectives, and objectives" (Pais 1993, 33).

On the one hand, youth is associated with contemporaneity and its progress; whilst on the other hand it is associated with future risks, especially when risks are related to cultural disintegration in which youth standards turn out to be the transgressions of that same modernity (Fornäs 1995, 1). Nonetheless, it is a fact that young people seem unquestionably to be at the cutting edge (Miles 2000, ix) of the dramatic transformations they live through more directly. These are the transformations that shape modern society (Melucci 1992, according to Miles 2000, 155-156), and that provide an understanding of the wider social and cultural evolution. Their early access to labour markets, for instance, led them to be regarded as "trendsetters" and as a "social avant-garde" (Wallace & Cross 1990, 1). As Wyn & White (1997, 20-21) argue, in the 1990's young people became popularly portrayed as the users of new consumption styles rather as individuals who reach adulthood. The notion of youth gained a new symbolic meaning on a global level and is no longer "coming of age....but being anything you want to be" (Melucci 1996, 7-8); and also emphasises the fact that in modern societies youth became a symbolic and cultural definition outside the biological scope, and the same holds for the characteristics that have always described this transitional period - "uncertainty, mobility, transience, openness to change". Pais (2000, 220) adds that "reversibility" is also one of the attributes of youth trajectories in recent times, as young people are able to move from youth to adulthood and back; as a matter of fact, youth is a construction in relation to adulthood" (Wyn & White 1997, 147).

The youth question was not often addressed by sociology in Brazil in the 1960's and 1970's, and until the 1980's, very few studies related to young people's pursuits - leisure, culture, behaviour, and cultural movements - were accomplished. In fact, the sociological concern has always been related to the role of youth as political agents in search of mobilisation and social change. As Abramo (1994, 23-24) argues, the focus on youth in the academy had always been

centred on the role of the student, his performance, and the students' movements since the university has always been a cultural and political reference in Brazil and Latin America. In the late 1980's youth once again became the object of study, although the debate focused on the institutions that were part of young people's lives - family, school, and legal systems for those in risk situations (social exclusion, violence, etc.). More recently, in the 1990's, academic production has been focusing on youth perspectives; experiences, perceptions, sociability, and performances (Abramo 1997, 25). However, the youth condition in all its plurality is still not very much researched in Brazil as the country's reality is dominated by social, cultural and ethnic inequalities (Sposito 2000). Having discussed aspects of the core of this dissertation, I will move on to the next section.

1.2   Objective of the study and research questions

The objective of this dissertation is to investigate consumption in relation to young people and new media technologies. The emergence of consumer and youth consumer culture in particular, was responsible for remarkable changes in young people's behaviour, identity-construction, lifestyles, and choices to mention just a few. More recently, the rise of information and communication technologies has brought even more transformations to the way in which the young live. Nevertheless, issues such as globalisation, labour markets shifts and its increasing demands, as well as inequalities of social, economic, and educational nature, had to be addressed as this study deals specifically with Brazil, a developing country, in its third section. It is also within the objective of this dissertation to contribute to youth research in Brazil and elsewhere. Research questions were formulated for two reasons; to delimit the scope of the study and to guide its development:

- Research question 1: What are the relationships between young people's use of ICTs and their consumption patterns and attitudes in Brazil?

The first research question focuses on young people's practices in Brazil, more specifically in Rio de Janeiro. Their practices are closely related to their adoption of information and communication technologies (ICTs), their consumption patterns and attitudes despite the socio-economic-educational context of inequalities. Paper 1 analyses this proposition.

- Research question 2: What are the differences and similarities between youth in a developing country (Brazil) and a developed (Finland) country in terms of ICT use, consumption patterns, identity construction and gender?

The objective of the second research question is to shed light on the differences and similarities of the cross-cultural comparison carried out between Finland and

Brazil - or more specifically in Rio de Janeiro. Issues such as the structural differences regarding the adoption of new technology, the consumption patterns of two different young populations, as well as the issues surrounding identity construction and gender are investigated in order to answer this question as is discussed in the second Paper.

- Research question 3: How do young people, particularly those of lower socioeconomic status, conceive consumption in Brazil?

The third research question addresses the growing importance of consumption, the ownership of material goods and the desire to be fashionable and to fit into society. At the same time, Brazil presents a perverse social framework, permeated by inequalities in regard to income, class, education, gender, race and labour, among some others. Paper 3 of this dissertation addresses these issues.

- Research question 4: In which ways are the gaps brought forth by the diffusion of ICTs, particularly mobile phones and the Internet among youth in Brazil, related to other socioeconomic gaps (e.g., economic, educational, cultural, etc.)?

In this fourth question the emergence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is addressed in Brazil, along with a discussion on the digital divide in relation to the Internet and its consequences for poor populations, since it is directly related to other kinds of inequalities and factors - social, economic, cultural, educational. In the third section of the dissertation I provide an analysis of the Brazilian paradigm. Paper 4 offers a thorough discussion on these issues.

1.3   Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of a theoretical introduction divided into four sections and subsections, and four articles that have been published and are found at the end of the dissertation.   Much of the initial (1.1) discussion is centred on contemporary society, consumption and youth, leading to a more thorough analysis in later sections. The following sections (1.2, 1.3 & 1.4) deal with the research questions of the study, methodology and data used in the published articles. The next section (2) will cover consumption and youth more specifically; its subsections (2.1, 2.2, 2.3 & 2.4) address the classical and contemporary views of consumption, the emergence of consumer culture and views related to youth consumption of ICTs as well as a concise analysis centred on consumption in different societies - Brazil and Latin America, Europe and North America.

Moving on to the following section, (3), the focus shifts to Brazil and the context of inequalities, the emergence of middle classes as a recent global phenomenon, as well as the rise of a so-called new Brazilian middle class, the role

of globalisation and educational issues affecting youth. The last section, (4), wraps up the study highlighting and summarising its main topics, and includes the theoretical implications of the dissertation, its limitations and future research prospects. In the remaining section, (5), the list of references can be found. The articles gathered in this dissertation address different aspects of the same issues - consumption, youth, and new media technology, but nonetheless have distinct goals; however all the studies aim to contribute to a wider rethinking of youth and to continuous examination of the multifaceted phenomenon called material consumption.

The first two papers are the final product of a large quantitative survey; the first - *Information technology and consumption habits among young people from Rio de Janeiro* (Pedrozo 2004) - is an introductory article centred on the Brazilian context and exploring issues as ICTs and youth consumption patterns e.g. use of money and ownership of goods. It was also a narrow sampling of participants (736) from private and federal public schools in Rio de Janeiro using only the local data set collected in 2003. The second article - *New technology and young people's consumer identities: A comparative study between Finland and Brazil* (Wilska & Pedrozo 2007) - is a comparative study with Finland using data from both countries; 637 participants from the Finnish survey (2001) and 987 from Rio de Janeiro surveys (2003 & 2004) - 736 participants in 2003 and a further 251 participants from public state schools were also added in 2004. This article focuses on postmodern theories for investigating ICTs and young people's changing consumer identities, consumption patterns and attitudes, and gender, without neglecting the digital divide and inequalities in Brazil.

The other two papers are, respectively, the result of a qualitative research and a theoretically oriented article. The third - *To be 'cool' or not to be 'cool': Young people's insights on consumption and social issues in Rio de Janeiro* (Pedrozo 2011) - discusses consumption, globalisation, inequalities, and youth challenges in a more comprehensive way and relates those issues to young people's transitions from schools to labour markets and the implications of those changes. The focus narrows down to interviews (14) with participants and their views on those questions within the Brazilian context. The fourth paper - *New media use in Brazil: Digital inclusion or digital divide?* (Pedrozo 2013), reviews the emergence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the debate on digital divide; then, the scope is delimited to concentrate on the local context to emphasise, explain, and shed light on the adoption and popularity of mobile phones as tools of democratisation, the slower development of the Internet and, more recently, the social network sites, despite unfavourable socioeconomic and huge educational disparities.

1.4   Data and research methods

I will start this section by presenting data and techniques that were used in the articles and then reviewing the relevant literature regarding research methods. While theoretical arguments have significant impact on methodology choices regarding research, practical issues must not be dismissed (McNeill & Chapman 2005). When considering a research design, called plan or proposal to conduct research by Creswell (2003, 3-5), it is necessary to have a broad research structure including the connection between philosophy, survey approaches, and specific methodologies that will be altered according to different objectives and guide the study; i.e. data collection, analysis, and research report. Each one of the elements mentioned above is shaped in different ways by methodologies and there are many kinds of research frameworks in the literature, although Creswell (2003) focus on three of them: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods of research investigation; regardless of the method, perspectives will be different. The choice of one approach over the other will depend on the combined aspects and the study.

In this study, I am utilising two types of data - survey and interview and two distinct objectives: quantitative methods were employed to explain young people's consumption attitudes and trends towards ICTs, and qualitative methods were applied in order to investigate social issues. Two approaches were chosen for the qualitative data: exploratory and descriptive; for the quantitative survey the explanatory approach was chosen.

The survey study that was carried out in Brazil and was subjected to analyses in the first two articles used replication of the Finnish experimental design to collect and analyse data. The problem and research hypotheses were formulated for the survey that had been previously carried out in Finland (2001). This method was chosen because the comparison included a small number of countries, in this case two countries. In regard to cross-national research, comparing countries can be an effective method for comprehending its social context. In comparative studies of two or more cultures, a specific phenomena is studied with the intention of comparing "their manifestations in socio-cultural settings, using the same research instruments, either to carry out secondary analysis of national data or to conduct new empirical work, explaining and generalising from them" (Hantrais & Mangen 1996, 1-2). The reason for comparing Brazil and Finland in this study is, first of all, to conduct the examination of the same phenomena in two very different societies; second, the investigation of youth attitudes in the interconnected world they live in brought some interesting conclusions, regardless of the circumstances found in Brazil. Thirdly, information always adds to knowledge and this study proposed just that.

According to Lavrakas (2008), using replication is reanalysing a study, using a new data set that was collected and statistically investigated with the same methodology of the original study. There are problems, of course, with cross-national comparative research as with any other methods; one example is the tendency to undervalue the impact of cultural differences (Hantrais & Mangen 1996, 4-5). Other methodologies in comparative analysis as the MDSD (Most Different Systems Design) have the logical structure of comparison as a target, which includes an epistemological perspective of the comparison (Faure 1994).

In the first two articles a questionnaire was used and the collected data were analysed using SPSS, a statistical analysis program, and the methodology was essentially the same: Factor Analysis (FA - Papers 1 & 2), analysis of variance (ANOVA - Paper 1) and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA - Paper 2). The explanation for using ANOVA and MANOVA and not linear regression, refers to the fact that independent variables are categorical or measured in categories; e.g. gender. Factor analysis is a data reduction technique whose aim is to reduce a large set of variables into a small number of factors; it is commonly used in studies regarding lifestyles and consumption styles, in particular (Pallant 2001, 151).

Analysis of variance compares the variation in mean scores between more than two different groups (supposedly because of the independent variable) with the variation within each of the groups (supposedly because of chance). Separate ANOVA analyses were performed separately for each dependent variable in the first article. MANOVA tests whether the mean group differences for two or more dependent variables are likely to have occurred by chance (Pallant 2001, 186, 217; Tabachnick & Fidell 2001, 322). The objective of data analysis is to show whether the factors that were found could explain the use of mobile phones and the Internet in the first two articles. The correlations of the identified factors with other variables as gender, type of school, education, and consumption attitudes were evaluated to investigate whether the attitudes towards ICTs were related to self-perceived general consumption styles and socio-demographic background.

The third paper is a qualitative study and the main purpose was to explore consumption related to social issues and youth perception of fitting in relation to identity construction, using individual interviews with a group of 14 participants ranging between 16-18 years of age. Two kinds of interviews were combined: a guide approach interview and a standardised open-ended format; the advantage of using a combined strategy is to join the flexibility of the former with the standardisation of the latter, especially when the sample is culturally heterogeneous, as it was in the study. I have also created a typology, which is a way of presenting results in qualitative research. In this study, the typology was developed from the framework I decided to follow and designed to describe

interviewees' consumption attitudes based on the analysis of patterns found in the interview data. The fourth and last paper is theoretically oriented in its entirety and brought forward a discussion on the emergence of new media and its consequences, particularly the worsening of inequalities in developing countries, such as in Brazil.

There are debates on whether a methodology is more appropriate than the other; however it all depends on the different contexts in which they are applied and their purposes. Among the main differences pointed out between these methodologies follows: quantitative research is more efficient, can test hypotheses, is replicable, but may overlook contextual detail; while qualitative data is more productive although time consuming, but cannot be replicated or generalised to wider contexts as a small group of interviewed people cannot be regarded as representative (Burns 2000, 9-14; Miles & Huberman 1994, 40). In social sciences it is necessary a combination of scientific methodologies based on statistics, and some "inevitably" subjective interpretation if a complex phenomena is to be understood (Minkov 2013, 63).

Quantitative research is usually exemplified by empirical investigation and by social survey (Bryman 1988, 1); it is a method used to measure objective theories by exploring the correlation among variables while qualitative inquiry is a way of looking at the importance people attribute to social or human problems. On the other hand, mixed methods research is a methodology of investigation combining quantitative and qualitative kinds of methods. Creswell (2009, 5-11) claims that philosophical theories are not well emphasised in research designs, but they should be as they shape research procedures. The author identifies four main schools of thought: Post-positivism, Constructivism, Advocacy/Participatory and Pragmatism.

The first also called positivist or empirical science implies experimental observation and measurement as well as theory confirmation; the theory has represented the traditional type of research, and it is more valid for quantitative research than for qualitative. Constructivism is usually seen as an approach to qualitative research and it is claimed that individuals try to understand the world where they work and live. The purpose of a research based on this theory is to count participants' opinions on what is being studied. Advocacy/Participatory is a philosophical theory linked to a political plan. Pragmatic perspective, when applied to research, provides the researcher with more freedom to decide on methodology and techniques that better suit his purposes. It is focused on the research problem and uses all types of approaches to understand the problem.

Although a thorough discussion on philosophical theories is not the purpose of this study, the methodology used in any study will reflect the theoretical interests and concerns of the investigation. The theoretical basis that has guided this

dissertation was the pragmatic perspective for both research designs; survey research and discourse analysis, although the principle of replication (related to positivism) - when the basics of a study is repeated and identical or very similar results are obtained - was used in two of the articles based on the quantitative survey.

The goals concerning social research can be classified as exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory. The first focuses on the "what" type of question and is used more with qualitative data, while the second concentrates on the "how" and "who" type of questions but, in practice, exploratory and descriptive research frequently become indistinct. Explanatory research concentrates on the "why" type of question and it builds on the other two. (Neuman 2004, 15–16, 41.).

2   CONSUMPTION AND YOUTH

2.1   Classical theoretical views of consumption

This section aims to present an overview of the classical sociological views on consumption in a summarised way. Initially, I will focus on Marx, Weber, Simmel and Veblen as very representative figures, although Veblen's views best express the objective of the study. Next, I will shift from socioeconomic interpretations to address the role of consumption in the emergence of youth consumer culture, "as an expression of desire and the production of signs" (Paterson 2006, 13), its impact on the construction of identity and on new media technology. To conclude, I will focus on youth consumption in Brazil and Latin America, Europe and North America.

Marx did not see consumption as it is regarded in modern society, involving cultural practices and symbolic activities (Paterson 2006), but it was Marx, according to Dunn (2008, 24-25), who set up the basis of a consumer society and a consumer culture by pointing out the social and material driving forces responsible for structural change. Consumption for Marx is seen as one of the elements of a person's life; in it, production occupies a vital position, provides what is to be consumed and its fulfilment (Parmiggiani 2007, 99). In order to analyse production and consumption, he separated them both and classified them as the starting and ending stage of a product; thus, acknowledging other aspects of consumption as socio-cultural or psychological other than economic. Marx (1973[1857-1861], 88) also pointed at distribution and exchange being placed in the intermediate stage, but society shapes distribution and people shape exchange. In his words, "in consumption, the product steps outside this social movement and becomes a direct object and servant of individual need, and satisfies it in being consumed". But, for Marx, production intrinsically depends on consumption and vice-versa, but "consumption produces production in a double way" first, "because a product becomes a real product only by being consumed"... and second, "because consumption creates the need for new production"...actually, "consumption reproduces the need" (Marx 1973[1857-1861] 91- 92). Dant (2003, 9) remarks that people attribute a "sensuous" value to goods which Marx called use value although in the process of commodity exchange, this value becomes unclear. In capitalism, however, Marx did not see commodity only as a product for trade, but as a force that changes society; an object characterised by alienation from consciousness and from social relations of producers (Dunn 2008, 26). In Dant's words (2003, 10), pointing at one of Marx's major criticisms towards

society: "It is not through changing ideas alone, but through changing material relationships that modern society will be transformed".

While Marx gave emphasis to economic issues, Weber (1958[1905]) attempted to demonstrate that cultural or symbolic characteristics of society complemented Marx's views, and his notion of status groups is particularly relevant for understanding consumer society. People's behaviour, according to Weber, was related to symbolic as well as to economic needs and he formed a theory about a social criterion based on status that could complement another one based on individual affluence; being that status was very significant in people's lifestyle (Gottdiener 2000, 4-5). Status groups stand for people who shared a lifestyle, and it was a criterion based on consumption that differentiated people from other groups and not a criterion based on production (Campbell 2002, 103). Weber also associated status and class when he stated that "class distinctions are linked in the most varied ways with status distinctions" although, later on Weber recognised that there was a contrast between status groups and social classes, meaning that "status groups are stratified according to the principles of their *consumption* of goods as represented by special styles of life". (Gerth & Mills 1958, 187, 193, original italics.). Weber's statement shows that he is referring to vertical status since consumption provides the base of stratification in the status criterion, and not production (Dunn 2008, 126). According to Dunn (2008, 127), a modern interpretation of Weber's status in relation to lifestyle would rely mostly on consumption patterns, as the relationship between lifestyle status and class became weaker.

The idea of consumption was also fundamental to Simmel's theory of modernity (Frisby 1992) and he developed a more phenomenological view regarding the social; that is, the world was at the same time objective and subjective and precisely the link between these or between human beings and commodities became the main aspect of his study of consumption (Edwards 2000). The wealth increase and the division of labour in modernity provided consumers with differentiation and increased the amount of goods for consumption. Simmel (1990[1900]) thought that by means of consumption people could not only understand their relationship and/or interaction with objects, but also attribute meaning to them (Holt & Searls 1994). However, he would say, only a few products out of a large number that surrounded individuals could be invested with a meaning of self (Miller 1987, 77). In that "culture of things" as Simmel (1990[1900]) defined modern consumption, people could consume any thing not necessarily related to fulfilling desires (Frisby 1992, 119), as desire was represented by a separation between subject and object (Dunn 2008, 100; Miller 1987, 70). In Simmel's (1990[1900], 66) words: "We desire objects

only if they are not immediately given to us for our enjoyment; that is, to the extent that they resist our desire".

But it was Veblen (1962[1899]) who created the notion of conspicuous consumption focusing on the American middle class in the late nineteenth-century. His interest concentrated on a particular kind of consumption that was visible at the onset of the mass consumption era (Miller 1987), characterised by the rise of individualism and the decline of tradition (Dunn 2008). But even more important than his concept of conspicuous consumption was his understanding that through objects or goods people could communicate differences in regard to social status that existed in the social structure (Parmiggiani 2007). According to his view, the shift to mass production along with technological progress, provided society with more affluence, and saw the development of a consumption-oriented middle class or leisure class, in opposition to a productive one. Thus, leisure became a sign of economic position, associated with consumption and commodities (Edwards 2000, 25; Gottdiener 2000). That consumption pattern grounded on superiority and self-importance could only be understood in a framework of class conflict and power (Østerberg 1988, 21), because the class Veblen (1962[1899], 61]) describes, the "nouveaux riches", aimed at distancing itself from the "world of necessity" - the basis of its financial resources - and, at the same time, tried to be like the upper classes - naturally wealthy (Miller 1987, 148). Consumption was, therefore, a decisive factor that would differentiate social classes but social emulation through consumption practices was the power behind the continuous growth in capital in capitalist society; "a derivative growth" as Veblen (1962[1899]) claimed. So, by dissociating consumption from a "hierarchy of natural needs" (Parmiggiani 2007, 107), conspicuous consumption confirmed the inadequacy of the rationalist paradigm. Veblen's main concept can be summarised as "status hierarchy is based on possessions. Wealth is honorific. Prestige comes from possessing excess" (Gottdiener 2000, 8-9).

2.2   The emergence of consumer culture

By the nineteenth century, the significant transformations that had taken place in earlier centuries were a long-lasting social reality; the emergence of consumer culture - an important aspect of capitalism - and conspicuous consumption - the use of material goods for social standing or self-expression - could already be noticed in pre-capitalist European society (Gottdiener 2000, 11-12; Campbell 1995; McCracken 1990). The economic changes that characterised the development of industrial capitalism, mass production, and the involvement of the

masses gave rise to consumerism and to consumer society; the masses could then engage in what was previously restricted to the elite (Fine 2002; Gottdiener 2000; McCracken 1990). Baudrillard (1998, 81-82) summarises the historical process:

> *"The same process of rationalisation of productive forces which took place in the nineteenth century in the sector of 'production', reaches its culmination in the twentieth century in that of 'consumption'. The industrial system, having socialised the masses as labour power, had much further to go to complete its own project and socialise them (that is, control them) as consumption power".*

Important changes in consumption resulted in equally important social changes that triggered even more changes in consumption. New consumer lifestyles emerged at the same time that a change in the market context was taking place, and provided for a new interaction between people and goods. As consumption and social change were in constant interaction, this dialectical interrelation set in motion the major transformations in that century and later. Individuals had, then, a new role to play - that of consumers - as far as they lived in a world saturated with goods filled with different meanings, which could only be decoded by specific knowledge. In other words, individuals were also becoming "semioticians" of new signs and symbols. (McCracken 1990, 20, 22, 27.). Consequently, the so-called mass consumption that changed consumption patterns with the creation of new consumers, linked to new products, could also be observed in the postwar economic development (Bocock 2001). The growth of consumption stimulated by people's wealth and increased spending, shifted to leisure and entertainment, clothing, electronic devices, and cars. In other words, consumption moved from a means towards an end, from "living to being an end in its own right". (Gabriel & Lang 1995, 7.). Thus, the whole idea of consumer culture in modern society involved not only the consumption of goods, but also social practices and cultural meanings aimed at consumption - "the culture of things-in-use" (Lury 1996, 5).

From the economic standpoint, consumption has to be analysed by taking into account its causes, its object, and the consumer. Production, as Fine (2002, 173-174) writes, is the connection with consumption, but unless income is produced and allocated to socioeconomic segments, consumer choices created, and the logistics chain set up, production cannot turn into consumption. To put it differently, production is the creation of products to be traded, and consumption is what follows or the use of those products. To a certain extent, consumer culture is seen as a kind of material culture and best defined as "a process of stylisation" involving the exchange value of trade goods, the transformation of production and

consumption practices, as well as consumption becoming independent from production (Lury 1996, 3-4). As Featherstone (1987, 57) states, to use the expression consumer culture means to give emphasis to goods as essential to understanding contemporary society, since material goods act as communicators and not just utilities if one considers the cultural aspect of the economy.

On the other hand, Paterson (2006) mentions that the concept of consumer culture and the activities related to consumption also started being regarded differently with the consumption paradigm shift from the economic sphere to the symbolic in late capitalist consumer society, and within the academic debate. Issues previously seen as negative, such as conspicuous consumption as social differentiation or nonexistent as self-identity, started being examined in different perspectives in the last decades: e.g., sub-cultures (Hebdige 1979; Willis 1977), symbolism (Bauman 1998; Warde 1994), postmodernism (Featherstone 1991). Paterson's (2006) statement means that the purchase or choice of material goods was not just for their usefulness but for their concept of desire and pleasure (Dunn 2008; Paterson 2006), or "the imaginative pleasure-seeking to which the product image lends itself" and the resulting creation of new desires (Humphery 1998, 25; Campbell 1995, 72, 89) instead of needs (Paterson 2006). For this modern hedonism, so characteristic of young generations, emotions are located "within" individuals as opposed to "in" the world; pleasure is found in imagination and daydream mix fantasy with reality thus, increasing pleasure (Campbell 1995, 72). The cultural meaning of consumption, as shown, has changed and consumption started also being seen as a sign of personal taste as many authors remark (Baudrillard 1998; Bauman 1998; Douglas & Isherwood 1996; Bourdieu 1984). From that point onwards, consumers started to produce meaning in individual ways when using goods; with "symbolic creativity" (Willis 1990; de Certeau 1984); at times, "subversively, as bricoleurs"; more exactly, "appropriating and reappropriating goods" (Sassatelli 2007, 81), transforming and "recontextualising meanings" (Willis 1990). As pointed out by de Certeau (1984), people individualise social and cultural elements as goods, in a creative manner, to make them resemble their own. It can then be said that consumption became a leisure activity with aesthetic meaning (Edwards 2000, 50) and the image of the modern consumer detached itself from production.

2.3   Youth consumer culture, identity and new technologies

In fact, in recent times a significant change concerning the excess of material goods and leisure activities took place, creating new consumers - mostly the

young - hedonistic and influenced by "an economy of desire and dreams" not by "an economy of needs" (Gronow 1997, 74); guided by emotions, not sensations (Campbell 1995). Contemporary consumer studies have stressed the role of consumption as a significant practice in the construction of individual identity (Uusitalo 1998), as a sphere where young people can be or try to be themselves (Miles 2000), particularly as a way the young can negotiate group affiliations and social status (Croghan, Griffin, Hunter & Phoenix 2006). It is currently acknowledged that the young have a more dynamic role regarding identity construction, and how significant it is to produce their own styles and looks from an unlimited number of sources (Cieslik & Pollock 2002). As Steinberg (2006, xv) argues, young people are "seduced by the material desires of a consumption-based view of selfhood". In contemporary Western societies, to have is to be (Dittmar 1992) and this is closely related to the development of mass consumer society and the emergence of individualism. Therefore, people began defining themselves according to their possessions and the possessions as self-identity expressions (Lury 1996, 8). As Dittmar (1992, 205) claims, a person's identity is shaped by the symbolic meanings of his own material goods; on the other hand, those same goods provide information about the identity of that individual.

The post-traditional society became plural in terms of a multiplicity of roles, values, and social relations, while in the previous stages of capitalism, work and employment would be tied to identity (Bocock 2001; Featherstone 1991; Giddens 1991). However, within the new context, the individual social identity is to be created and maintained (Slater 1997, 83). It is also recognised that the notion of identity is not anchored in tradition anymore; it is now anchored in the ability to keep a particular narrative going (Giddens 1991, 54) as the identity project has become a reflexive process in which the self is negotiated in terms of choice among a plurality of lifestyle preferences, patterns of consumption and goods. Modern identities are, therefore, identified with consumption since the diversity of lifestyles lead to more consumption options (Slater 1997).

Indeed, lifestyles became life projects; people feel the need to show who they are by revealing their individuality, communicating messages to others, and describing themselves through the use of clothing, goods, practices and experiences conceived as lifestyle construction. Therefore, lifestyles are the external representation of a self-identity constructed and maintained in this context (Miles 2002; Bauman 1998; Beck 1992; Giddens 1991; Featherstone

1987), as they provide everyday lives with symbols and signs which are culturally rooted or have social value in standardised ways; hence, making social practices consistent (Dunn 2008; Chaney 1996). Gottdiener (2000, 19-20) summarises, positing that "consumption today consists of appropriating signs...we use commodities in the context of lifestyle construction and we validate a specific image". As Featherstone (1987, 59) argues,

> "*Rather than unreflexively adopting a lifestyle, through tradition or habit, the new heroes of consumer culture make lifestyle a life project and display their individuality and sense of style in the particularity of the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearance and bodily dispositions they design together into a lifestyle".*

However, the discussion on identity construction in postmodernity, as well as outside its boundaries, leads to references of multiple, fragmented, changeable, or decentred identities rather than unitary or unchangeable ones, and consumption can control such unstableness (cf Cieslik & Pollock 2002; Miles 2000; Rattansi & Phoenix 1997; Slater 1997; Turkle 1996; Featherstone 1987). Miles (2000) argues that young people use consumption as a resource for emphasising features of their identities, although other issues like gender, class, race, family background and so forth affect identities as well. As Alberto Melucci (1992, according to Miles 2000, 154) points out,

> "*We participate simultaneously in a number of areas, groups, and dimensions of social and cultural life...In each of these settings we live a part of ourselves, certain dimensions of our personalities and experience. We are therefore no longer defined by a single identification criterion...This has given rise to a proliferation of the ways in which individuals define themselves".*

The young are the ones more exposed to a pluralisation of life opportunities (Melucci 1992, according to Miles 2000, 154), even though all people go through the same process and insofar as young people make use of symbolism to create their identities, more important is the role of their lifestyles. The fact that there is a pluralisation of opportunities for young people to choose from, also weakens references on which identities are built; on the other hand, the young think their identities must be anchored in contemporary times in order to deal with so many structural changes - mainly cultural and social (Melucci 1999). As Melucci (1999, 123) argues, young people are not only the most important actors of dramatic

changes shaping modern society, they are the ones who "experience them most immediately". Therefore, consumption can be a tool for the young to construct who they are, and material goods play this role as they are invested with symbolic connotations so that affiliations with peers and identities can be created. This is where the importance of consumption resides. However, young people'sidentity construction processes are incorporated in their cultural specificities and local contexts, and bring both opportunities and restrictions, especially for the low-income youth, vis-à-vis their subjective change (Castro 2006). Nonetheless, social status and income still play an important role in the risk society (Miles, Cliff & Burr 1998, 94).

The emergence of youth cultures - referred to as social constructions by some authors (Steinberg 2006, xiv; Lury 1996, 195; Wallace & Cross 1990, 1), have shown to be an indicator of social change and an important consumer market segment with its roots in the 1950s and 1960s. This was a result of their increasing potential to spend, of a unique "conspicuous and leisure-oriented consumption", and to a great extent connected to identity negotiation - typical of that life stage (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard 2006; Osgerby 1998, 35). In the 1980's, consumption was already embedded in their practices (Miles 2000), and the following decade witnessed a young consumer willing to pay to fit in and to be cool, as peer pressure became a persuasive force (Klein 2002) in the consumption driven market. It thus seems that the increasing expansion of new products, services, retailing, and advertising has had a major impact on young people's everyday lives as they have been regarded as the motivating force in the development of consumption patterns and lifestyles, products, and cultural practices (France 2007). It is also claimed that young people influence trends amongst the entire population (Wilska & Pedrozo 2007) and even turn them into a "consumable item" in that the symbolic signs of being young belong to consumer market (Wyn & White 1997, 86). Youth can, then, be in the vanguard of social change triggered by the emergence of consumer society (Wilska 2003; Miles 2000).

But although young people'sconsumption is focused on hedonism, visibility and open-mindedness (Wilska 2003), their hedonistic behaviour is still subjected to limitations imposed by dominant social frameworks. When defining the role of youth cultures vis-à-vis the social, Wallace and Kovacheva (1996, 190) say that "youth cultures can be a form of resistance to dominant definitions of what young people should be, or it can be a way of creating some independent alternative identity based around peer groups than formal structures." As an example, in Brazil's risk society, being young is experienced by youth in different ways and is shaped by different social inclusions, leading to different opportunities to access material and cultural goods (Minayo, Assis, Souza, Njaine, Deslandes, Silva,

Fraga, Gomes, Abramovay, Waiselfisz & Monteiro 1999, 17). But despite existing restrictions, young people choose their own culture, play with its meanings and build their own lifestyles, influenced by popular culture and media; consequently, the way youth define their place is no longer tied to ideological commitments.

To be young today is not only associated with age or social class as it once was, it is necessary to investigate young people as deeply involved with consumer culture, and to link it to cultural codes and symbols; e.g., young people's attachment to consumption styles, behaviour and dress codes (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard 2006; Melucci 1999; Wallace & Kovacheva 1996); although consumption has to be separately understood within each social context in which it takes place. However, it is important to emphasise that youth from different parts of the world may display the same behaviours and consume the same products, either media (music, ICTs and so on) or clothing, while their participation in global youth cultural consumption practices is shaped by factors such as income, religion, language, class, gender and ethnicity (Nilan & Feixa 2006, 8), as well as education, and differs among and within countries. On a cultural level, globalisation seems to increase existing inequalities or divides, therefore poor youth from developing countries do not always have access to products or lifestyles, although "the commodity culture" shows a different image according to the World Youth Report (2003, 302).

Youth culture seems to be its emblematic representation in the globalisation era; the dichotomies of its discourse seem to be mainly projected on youth culture, but the consequences of globalisation are complex and involve not only an economic process, but also profound social implications (Maira 2004, 203). Young people are faced with many challenges nowadays; they experience the transition to labour markets and adulthood much later than was the case in the past (Furlong & Cartmel 1997), and their transitions are more undefined (World Youth Report 2003, 305). The causes are primarily related to issues of mass education (Melucci 1996) and more demands for work qualifications. More importantly, they are also related to an increased level of socioeconomic unpredictability within a rapidly changing global context.

The groundbreaking emergence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the last few years, created a new kind of consumption - consumption of media technologies. Young people became ICT consumers - mobile phones, the Internet, social networks, games as well as fashion and leisure activities (France 2007). As Held and McGrew (2002, 1) argue, the extraordinary development of "transcontinental flows and patterns of social interaction" produced multifaceted and uneven ways of "interconnectedness," which provided the young with important tools for identity construction (Kenway & Bullen 2008,

17; Caron & Caronia 2007). From a sociological perspective, it is important to emphasise the fact that ICTs can create new social patterns of development, can be based on existing ones or can even reproduce older patterns (Sassen 2002, 365, 368-369) since new technologies and, particularly the Internet, are embedded in the broad socio-cultural-economic organisation within which people live. Çelik (2011, 149) provides the Turkish example, writing that mobile phones not only mean modernity of a new kind, but "cannot be dissociated from the conditions that transform them into social practice".

Analysing the media from a cultural perspective, Willis (1990, 47) argues that the young are the social group that "reads" the new media in a fashionable manner. They get inspiration for many different pursuits, and the media provide and create dimensions for what young people are and what they want to be. As a result of the global development of new media technologies, consumer cultures are becoming more and more globalised in the sense that they are diffused through local cultures, whilst there is also a reciprocal action (Slater 1997; Appadurai 1996), opening up an "explosion of symbolic opportunities for individual experience" (Melucci 1999, 125). This corroborates the fact that "consumption is never a passive or unmediated social process...but always a process through which social meanings are constructed and contested" (Lee 1993, 50).

Mobile phones, among other media technologies, have become democratising tools (Fortunati 2003, 2006), technologies of connectivity (Fortunati & Manganelli 2002), "citizenship commodity" (Fortunati 2002, 526), "mediating objects"; in other words, carriers of communications across space or time, or both, and between people who live far apart (Dant 1999, 13, 153), extensions of user's presence (Gergen 2002) and a "conduit" for an emotional attachment mediating the expression of feelings (Vincent 2005, 117; Lasen 2004). Therefore, mobile phones became iconic for users - a "fetish"-like object reinforcing individualities, especially for young people in many countries (Ling & Yttri 2006, 230; Fortunati 2005, 11; Glotz, Bertschi & Locke 2005; Ling 2004). As an accessory with functional aspects it fulfils an "aesthetic statement" about its owners, communicates one's tastes to others, and displays current fashion trends; hence, revealing social status and influence (Katz 2006, 66; Ling & Yttri 2006; Harper 2003). It is, fundamentally, about "me, my mobile and my identity" (Vincent 2005, 120). These technologies not only symbolically affect young people's lives, marking a rite of passage from childhood to adolescence, but also play a significant role in identity-construction (Caron & Caronia 2007; Hartmann 2005).

Gitte Stald (2008, 143) named mobile identity the two aspects associated with young people; the first is related to the notion of identity as shaped by ICTs and, in particular by mobile phones. The other concerns identity itself as somewhat

mobile and changeable. In fact, Ziehe (1989, according to Skog 2002, 255) points at what he names processes that are important to young people's identity construction: "reflexivity, makeability, and individualisation". Reflexivity is reflecting identity via symbolism or person-to-person interaction; makeability means to expose lifestyles to influences; and individualisation refers to subjectivity. Mobile phones simultaneously provided young people with a sensation of freedom and privacy, and produced a mobile culture characterised by mobility, displacement, and nomadism; together with new attitudes and new language, motivated by the need to communicate. In fact, accessibility and being connected and synchronised with peers through social networks became even more important than mobility (Vincent 2003; Townsend 2002; Tully 2002). But youth mobility can also be interpreted from three different perspectives - firstly, the world does not have borders for privileged young people; secondly, for some others the complex situations they encounter in their own countries compel them to move; and thirdly, youth involvement in global youth culture in which their identities are shaped through new media, fashion, music, and so on. Youth mobility can also be referred to in contexts in which young people are the agents and producers of change in their own lives (Dolby & Rizvi 2007, 5).

The young have also moved from their position as consumers to producers of mobile technology in that they personalise and customise their devices (Goggin 2008; Skog 2002) making them unique. They also identify the devices with their bodies and virtually make them become an extension – to their ears, their voices, their touch (Lorente 2002, 17). There are differences to some extent regarding mobile phone use and practices among countries that use this technology, although these practices "find themselves converging on a common set of practices, give voice to a common set of social conduct concerns and find themselves grappling with negotiations of time, space and identity - All despite their uniqueness" (Puro 2002, 15). But the real cultural impact of mobile technologies is difficult to measure due to both the diversity and complexity of cultural behaviour itself (Kim 2002). Mobile phones[1] are, for example, the main kind of social communication among many African youth, regardless of the income level or if they are located in urban or rural areas. Napolitano (2010, 105) makes two particular observations in regard to African young people - that nowadays mobile phone users are younger and poorer than earlier users, and that technology may represent social change. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the role of technology, in this case mobile phones in Africa, within the

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[1] Mobile phone subscriptions in Africa grew faster than in any other region of the world; from 54 million in 2003 to approximately 350 million in 2008 (Napolitano 2010).

surrounding context. As Mark Weiser (1991) remarks, "the most profound technologies are those that disappear. They weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it".

2.4 Youth consumption in different societies: Brazilian and Latin American, European and North American

The main motivation for comparing young people from different societies; e.g., a Third World country versus a First World country, and discussing issues such as social and economic exclusion and education parameters, lies in the fact that comparative research is valuable because differences in young people's unique experiences in their social contexts can be investigated; however, it is more difficult to draw general conclusions. As Sztompka (1988, 215) has argued, researchers should look to preserve "enclaves of uniqueness" instead of focusing on standardised models across societies and consider the "growing homogeneity and uniformity". On the other hand, typical experiences might not be that simple to describe as differences between countries are based on their specificities - their own cultures, traditions, institutional issues as family, labour markets, access to the information society, and access to economic resources (Gipps 1996, according to Cartmel 2003, 88). Despite globalisation or global economic processes, countries keep their social and economic systems structurally different which, in turn, makes it more difficult to compare theoretical models. One example is the investigation of the transition from school to work, which varies from country to country; in Europe, North America or among Latin countries. In addition, with increased globalisation, the global economy and its outcomes on local, national and international labour markets have to be taken into account when doing comparative research between countries (Cartmel 2003), since the new economy is not sufficiently inclusive and causes different impacts on people in different societies and geographical locations, creating challenges and inequalities that, although familiar to many countries, are handled in different ways (Perrons 2004).

Youth cultures have undoubtedly been in the vanguard of new consumption trends, "spreading new styles across geographical and linguistic borders" (Wallace & Kovacheva 1996), and it seems that young people experience similar "challenges, interests, and concerns" (Brown & Larson 2002, p.1) in the same way because there is a concept of "global youth culture," at least for middle and upper class youth who share the same tastes, e.g. in clothing and music (Schlegel 2000). However, access to consumption is not the same everywhere; it differs in European countries, in North America, and in the rest of the world. Social, economic, and educational inequalities are different from country to country and

even within countries, whether developing or developed countries; therefore, youth experience all sorts of limitations in this regard. The fact that media products, clothing, and music are found everywhere does not mean that young people are engaged in global consumer culture, or have gone through a process of homogenisation. Even if European youths have cultural representations, music, and lifestyles that are alike, the meanings attributed to them differ from place to place. The way youth are structured, their transition to labour markets, and their financial conditions, as well as their families' financial conditions, have a considerable impact on their involvement in cultural and social spheres. (Wallace & Kovacheva 1996, 211-212.).

Wallace and Kovacheva (1996) make a comparison between Eastern and Western European countries, pointing out that youths in countries such as Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Slovakia are experiencing a process of regional diversification; from a comparable homogeneity to a growing heterogeneity. They are becoming more affluent and, as a result, are consuming more. On the other hand, youths in Western Europe are subjected to a somewhat different situation; the characteristic affluence and individualism of the north is in contrast to rising unemployment in the south. Indeed, as Brown and Larson (2002, 15) explain, Western individualism and self-centredness among young people are increasing, although it cannot be generalised since values and traditions differ among countries and in regions within countries. However, it seems that a conflict between connectedness and individualism characterise modern youth in terms of self-sufficiency regarding family relationships and society altogether; "involvement in versus alienation from broader political and social institutions". Despite similarities, young people's life experiences and opportunities are strikingly different in the world, particularly regarding work, education, and their role as social agents able to shape future prospects (Furlong and Cartmel 1997). Social pressures acting upon young people may be the same, but are, in fact, "playing out" differently (Brown & Larson 2002, p.19).

Comparative studies (Kürten 2006; Hammer 2003) of unemployment have shown that it has become one of the most debated issues in Europe, because unemployment rates range from four to seventeen percent, and where young people are concerned, the discussion is even more important. Youth unemployment rates are even higher than the general population; therefore, the risk of exclusion and marginalisation is equally high; although Furlong and Cartmel (2003, 29) see "social exclusion as a dynamic process", meaning that "long-term unemployment frequently leads to marginalisation but does not necessarily result in exclusion". In 2000, youth unemployment within the European Union (EU) was around 16 per cent, more than twice the seven per cent rate for adults (Hammer 2003, 1), and in 2004 there was an increase - more than

18,6 per cent of people under the age of 25 years old had no work within the EU and, except France where youth unemployment is critical, all other countries from the research (Austria, Germany, Portugal and Sweden) were below the EU's total average of 18,6 per cent (Kürten 2006, 2,6). Hammer (2003, 2) points out that countries such as Italy, Finland and Spain have the highest rates of youth unemployment; according to her findings, Sweden and France have middle rates and Germany, Denmark and Norway have the lowest rates. The Eurostat data from spring 2012 provided a critical baseline about the current rates in Europe as a result of the economic crisis since 2008 – there was more than 50 percent youth unemployment in Greece and Spain, over 30 per cent in Bulgaria, Italy, Portugal and Slovakia and an average of 22 per cent in Europe. "The risk of a 'lost' generation is turning into a shocking reality" (Dietrich 2012).

In Brazil and in Latin America as well, young people face unfavourable conditions - unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and informality remain critical issues; unemployment, in particular, is a very serious problem and seems to be worsening, whilst rates are particularly high among the poor and less skilled ones (Cruces, Ham & Viollaz 2012; Mariscal, Botelho & Gutiérrez 2008; Berg, Ernst & Auer 2006). In order to minimise the problem, public policies have been implemented, although not successfully (Garcia, Araújo, Faustino, Araújo & Souza 2010). Poor young workers are also represented in numbers that are disproportionately high regarding unstable forms of employment; "73 per cent of the fifteen- to nineteen-year-olds in the first quintile are engaged in informal employment." The majority of unemployed youth are less educated, although unemployment rates for higher educated youth have also increased (Berg, Ernst & Auer 2006, 18), and the fact is that being less educated makes it difficult for young people to find a job position.

In Mexico, youth ages 14-29 correspond to 30 per cent of the economically active population and about 60 per cent of the unemployed youth nationally. Colombia is another example; with less than half of Mexico's population (111 million), higher education has contributed to reducing poverty figures, but income inequality still considerably affects its population. (Mariscal, Botelho & Gutiérrez 2008, 12, 40.). As Cacciamali (2005, 3) points out, "the underinvestment in education and training is an obstacle to economic and social improvement as far as poor young people continually remain attached to low skills and unemployment, or low quality employment".

In the United States, the youth economic situation in particular those with an education less than the college level has worsened; aggregate economic activity such as technological changes or increased trade with less developed countries with large populations of unskilled youth was the most important determinant of youth unemployment in the country. Not only in the United States, but in

approximately all developed countries (OECD countries), youth labour market has deteriorated. (Blanchflower & Freeman 2000, 3-5.).

When ICT development in cross-countries comparison is the issue to be surveyed, it is equally important to pay attention to cultural factors from each country as they can affect use patterns in regard to mobile phones and the Internet in different ways (Ishii & Wu 2006; Park & Jun 2003; Lee, Kim, Lee & Kim 2002). Ishii and Wu (2006, 96-97) call "media cultures" the unique patterns of use that are seen in several countries, however, few studies have analysed the cultural aspects and differences in communication technologies across countries. For instance in Northern Europe, which is characterised as more individualistic, people use more SMS in their mobile phones, while in Southern Europe and Latin America, known to be more collective-oriented, people use mobiles to talk (Ishii & Wu 2006; De Mooij 2004). Authors like Kasesniemi and Rautiainen (2002) have observed that mobile phone users as well as the use of mobile services affect the existing cultures to a great extent, and may create new trends and lifestyles.

While ICTs have driven remarkable changes in developing countries, technologies keep developing in developed countries; hence increasing the gap between these societies and within them (Mariscal, Botelho & Gutiérrez 2008, 41). It is also acknowledged that when the same technology is launched in different places, its adoption and use rely on societies' characteristics and structure; in other words, the development of the information society brings different consequences for different countries (Räsänen & Kouvo 2007; Park & Jun 2003). In Brazil, for instance, the development in terms of mobile penetration[2] is remarkable, but the Internet access in regard to broadband is still very limited (Mariscal, Botelho & Gutiérrez 2008, 38). However, the majority of the low-income population who access the Internet nowadays do so through LAN houses[3], considered a phenomenon spreading in a extremely rapid way in poor communities and particularly in "favelas" [slums][4] across the country. More than 90,000 LAN houses have been assembled throughout urban and mainly rural areas, supplying Internet access at reasonable fees to more than 70 per cent of the poorest social segment, including children and youth, compared with only 5 percent that have access through public telecentres. (Pozzebon & Diniz 2012, 290;

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[2] In 2010, Brazil reached the more than one mobile subscription mark per citizen (Pozzebon & Diniz 2012).

[3] LAN houses are business establishments with no relation to public policies whatsoever, which provide access to computers and to the Internet. Forty-two percent of the people play games and an equal proportion access the Internet for cultural activities, news and leisure. Social network sites and instant messaging are also very common; additionally, LAN houses are used for research, school assignments and job searching (see Lemos & Martini 2010, 31-32).

[4] Favelas are now called communities.

Lemos & Martini 2010, 31-32). As Pozzebon and Diniz (2012) note, "Brazil is a fascinating laboratory of ICT innovation and the best example is the LAN houses which represent a constant reinvention of social actors from the low-income stratum entrepreneurially appropriating a modernity not designed for them".

In regard to other Latin American countries, Chile is the leading country in ICT adoption; similarly, Mexico is continually developing to become an information technology society in due course, but falls somewhat behind other countries with comparable income levels like Argentine and Brazil. On the other hand, when comparing Colombia's landline and mobile telephony as well as the Internet to other countries in Latin America with a comparable development level, the digital divide is clear, particularly concerning Internet access. Only African states have comparable Internet access levels to those of Colombia. (Mariscal, Botelho & Gutiérrez 2008, 43, 56.). Brazil will now be the focus in the next sections (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4).

3 BRAZILIAN PARADIGM: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

3.1 The emergence of middle classes

Middle class as defined by Lawrence James (2008, 2), is a "sprawling, untidy organism in a perpetual state of evolution"; however there is not a uniform middle class, there are middle classes characterised by different aspects (Stewart 2010). Stewart (2010, 17) argues that "what members of the so-called middle classes have in common it is the fact that their life patterns are contemporary manifestations of bourgeois individualism, shifting and mutating in line with political, economic and social trends".

   In the Marxist tradition, social class is a self-conscious, structured group with lifestyles and behaviour patterns quite different from other classes; in the Weberian tradition, measurable characteristics such as education, income and occupation are individual attributes to be looked at and the class consciousness issue is not taken into account (Souza & Lamounier 2010, 13). Marx identified class relations as structured oppositions; and within those relations, people had different social status, rights and interests. Although Marx's focus was on the economy, the roles people played in economic production were crucial to realising how individuals construct class relations and the existent levels of power within those relations (Morrison 2006, 57). In the Weberian tradition, the concept of exploitation is absent, although it is rooted in the Marxist tradition. This is the main significant difference in class structure analysis in both theories. The class concept for Weber plays a secondary role while he focuses his attention on concepts of life chances; more subjective concepts related to mobility and equality and not to the idea of the "mode of production" - the basis in Marx's model. Classes for Weber are related to kinds of stratification typical of the market (Wright 2005, 204-205, 315), because he stressed economic factors as the factors determining social classes; that is, when people compete in the market, they are driven by their own interests, and not by common interests against a ruling class (Morrison 2006, 303; Clark & Lipset 2001, 39-42). Weber was also interested in identifying what created a class consciousness, but he also found that there was not only one kind of class consciousness, but distinctions according to the culture of a society (Clark & Lipset 2001).

   Clark and Lipset (2001) argue that in recent decades new types of social stratification are rising and traditional class hierarchies are weakening, and it could be described as "the fragmentation of stratification" as the authors point out. Among some examples are the emergence of the middle class differentiated by

skill level as Dahrendorf (1959) has referred to, the occupational categories developed by Wright (1985) and "the class differentiated lifestyles, the decline of economic determinism and the increased importance of social and cultural factors", including "social mobility less family-determined, more ability and education determined" (Clark & Lipset 2001, 52). Although economic growth weakens hierarchical class stratification, Hout, Brooks and Manza (2001, 62) mention that class stratification still exists in contemporary post-industrial societies, characterised by wealth versus poverty. Crompton further (2008, 5) adds that "class still persist as systematically structured social and economic disadvantage, which is reproduced over the generations".

In regard to middle classes, there are two opposing views as Souza and Lamounier (2010, 8) argue; one sees the rise of the middle class as the driving force behind social reforms and the other, influenced by Marxism, thinks that the middle class has "a false class consciousness". Despite the importance of Marx's and Weber's legacy, the class concept based on traditional hierarchies has not had the same influence in contemporary times; either because the modern framework of inequality has changed and cannot be analysed based on those principles, or because traditional class categories are being replaced by analyses based on income, socioeconomic position and education (Grusky & Weeden 2008). Whereas the class concept was connected to the idea of "polarisation" in Marx, it is currently more linked to the idea of "fragmentation" with the increase of different class categories as well as new kinds of class divisions; e.g. the ones based on consumption patterns (Bradley 1996, 4). On the other hand, consumption practices work as a reinforcement and reproduction of social hierarchies (Crompton 1996, 118)

The emergence of middle classes occurred more than a century ago in the industrialised countries, particularly in Britain and in the United States, following the industrial revolution (Bradley 1996, 1). In the mid-twentieth century, both countries benefitted from social mobility as a result of structural change; in the United States, education had an important role in weakening the association between social origins and goals and the outcome was an apparently more open society. However, politics and the austere economic situation of the 1970's and 1980's have changed the scenario of openness and mobility. On the other hand, in Britain, social origins still affect opportunities to move on, considering that the British society is definitely a more closed society than the American one; the austere political and economic situation of the 1970's and 1980's in Britain also affected perspectives on social mobility, and social differences became even more visible. However, it is claimed that both countries have similar patterns of social mobility as a result of minimum state involvement in decreasing class inequalities (Devine 1997, 73-74). As a matter of fact, a research project on intergenerational

mobility in Europe and North America conducted by Blanden, Gregg and Machin (2005), concluded that there has been a growing relationship between family income and educational achievement, and the increase of higher education as well as the access to professional jobs in the last few decades has benefitted wealthy families in an unequal fashion. As Archer, Hutchings and Ross (2003, 5) argue "education has always played an important role in ensuring either the reproduction of [middle-class] privileges or [working-class] disadvantages".

As Western Europe has been experiencing a process of individualisation and although inequalities do exist, its societies are more and more characterised by wealth, as well as instabilities, particularly in regard to labour markets. This is a direct consequence of the "marketization of societies" or the "market forces," as Crompton (1999, 132) claims. At the same time, a democratisation of certain kinds of consumption, previously exclusive, has taken place and is now accessible to the majority of people (Stewart 2010, 41; Beck 1992, 100). As Lash and Urry (1994, 323) claim, middle class people, although important social actors, are seen more as individuals and less as class affiliates since social classes, which were "focused around places, national spaces and organised hierarchies...are now simultaneously localised and globalised". In the latter sense "classes are rapidly dissolving at the very time that social and spatial inequalities rapidly increase".

3.2   The new middle class in Brazil: A new pattern of consumption

The growth of the middle class in emerging countries particularly in Brazil, India, and China, is considered one of the most important social and economic phenomenon in recent times, even comparable in many aspects to the emergence of middle class more than a century ago in Europe and North America. The strengthening of the world economy in the last twenty years has reduced income inequalities in emerging countries, and made social mobility possible for large populations, giving rise to what is being called the new middle class (Souza & Lamounier 2010, 1).

Brazil grew at a rapid pace in the second half of the twentieth century as a result of fast industrialisation and growth in both service sectors and government, and despite many social and economic gaps, Brazilian society always demonstrated a strong consumerist trend, centred on hedonism (Sorj 2000). Traditional middle classes in Brazil had always been regarded as depositary of cultural capital, tastes and manners, with easy access to higher education. They shared values and lifestyles with upper classes and tended to be socially and politically conservative like middle classes in other countries. Its growth happened during the 1960's and early 1970's as a result of a social mobility

processes that created idealised paradigms of how to be or belong to the middle class. This paradigm was built on collective hopes and desires, shared aspirations, consumption of goods and practices that have been important to the identity construction of that particular class, and was already incorporated into a capitalist consumer culture. (O'Dougherty 2002, 1998.).

According to Bourdieu (1984, 367), what distinguished the new middle classes from other classes was their unusual style towards pleasure and pleasure as duty. Featherstone (1991, xxiii) reinforced this view, adding that it was their search for expressive and liberated lifestyles, which he called "calculating hedonism"; that is, to feel pleasure without restrictions. On the other hand, most Brazilians were excluded from those processes (O'Dougherty 2002, 1998) and the explanation was that consumption and hedonism have singled out Brazilian middle classes from other classes, partly due to social mobility, but also to advertising, particularly on television, whose significant role defined middle classes' consumption aspirations; at the same time, television continually encouraged the poor to believe they could have the same consumption patterns as more affluent classes had (Sorj 2000).

However, as Souza and Lamounier (2010) point out, over the last 25 years a major process of vertical and structural social mobility has been occurring in Brazil, similar to what happened in other emerging countries as well with the growth of world economies. In the Brazilian case, it is not individual mobility as the authors argue, but of a whole segment of mobility, as a result of important factors - employment growth, inflation control, more credit availability, price stability, and social programs - contributing to the upward economic mobility of the poorest segments [C, D and E][5], and particularly for class C development. This large middle class corresponded to 44.19% of the population in April 2002 and, after six years has reached 51.89%, with average household income ranging from R$ 1064.00 (€394.00) to R$ 4591.00 (€1699.00) according to Neri (2008, 27-29).

Traditional middle classes differentiate themselves from the emerging class because they have achieved their socio-economic-cultural status in past times, while members of this new class are still trying to attain different goals in life: to reach a higher income pattern and keep it compatible with lifestyles involving more consumption, higher education and a profession of prestige (Souza & Lamounier 2010, 25). Material ambitions, such as buying a house, a car,

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[5] Brazil Criterium of Economic Classification (CCEB) expanded its economic classification (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, D, E) based on ownership of goods, education level and income dividing class C (as of 01/01/2013).

electronics and clothing, among others, became priorities for the new consumers, although the difference lies in the way goods are purchased; always on credit cards or credit provided by lending institutions, with high interest rates and long repayment schedules. One exception is the increase in travelling brought about by reduced tariffs and payment in instalments with no interests. As Van Bavel and Sell-Trujillo (2003) claim, consumption on credit seems to be an individual way of reducing the gap between rich and poor.

Jessé Souza (2010) and other scholars state that it is inaccurate to see the "new middle class" only through an increase in consumption; the label is also erroneously given since it seems to be depicting a society with the middle class as the prevailing stratum, and the poor as the marginal sector, but that is not the case in Brazil. Actually, Souza (2010, 6-7) argues that this is the "new working class" that seems to be a new social class, even though its members believe in hard work and determination; on the other hand, despite their income level that must be interpreted as family income, they do not have the same cultural capital in comparison to traditional middle classes. Souza and Lamounier (2010, 16, 41) note that although the economic concept of middle class has been changing, moral and cultural middle class values tend to be more stable. On the other hand, the reaction to mass consumption and the weakening of class divisions lead to the creation of new barriers - material and symbolic; in opposition to material consumption, there is an attempt to enhance the cultural side of some leisure activities as art and travel abroad.

3.3   Globalisation issues in Brazil: Are consumption patterns affected?

Globalisation, for some authors, has changed the former division between North and South, and has created a "new social architecture" that goes beyond cultural and regional borders, reorganising the world between "winners and losers" (Held & McGrew 2002, 81). In this globalised setting, countries suffer from cultural, economic, political, and environmental interventions, among others, on their national identities, power, communication networks, and even sovereignty. These interventions are carried out with the participation of international actors and the market economy rules of developed countries (Beck 1999).

Latin America, among other regions, had global development programmes designed in a way in which all had a standardised structure depending on the strength of the countries' political institutions, although there were variations on how those programmes were applied. Standardisation as a whole, included privatisation and government intervention to a minimum - "market liberalisation,

welfare restrictions, minimal regulation of capital flows, deregulation of labour markets and to be governed by political and economic necessity rather than by public design" (Held & McGrew 2002, 17). The globalisation model for Brazil has been the "top-down" one; that is, in order to become integrated in a global market, the country had to go through a globalisation process, which included large multinational corporations and foreign capital among other significant changes (Sidhu & Torres 2006, 270). This has caused a social crisis aggravated by job insecurity, unemployment and exclusion (Alcoforado 1997). As a result, global transformations have continually driven Brazil towards a more advanced growth comparable to developed countries, although it is a place of 'extremes and disparities, with income, technological and social advances unequally distributed' (Rizzini & Barker 2002, 133). That is to say, basic needs such as housing, healthcare and education, as well as other public services of a great majority of the population, remain unattended (Pedrozo 2011).

Globalisation not only brought a heavy burden to societies from developing countries, but also for poor populations in developed nations "under the sway of capitalist market relations" (Munck 2004, 25); thereby causing great changes, particularly to young people's experiences. As labour became more fragmented in the globalised world, major changes took place, especially in relation to young people's transition from school to labour markets (France 2007; Munck 2004); their lives became a "biographical trajectory" (Pais 1993, 196) based more on autonomy (Pais 2009), a "reflexive biography" (Giddens 1991), or, as Beck and Beck-Gernshein (2002) note that that is what the normal biography turns out to be - not without risks or by choice, but intrinsically related to the value young people invest in the present or future, and how they control their own careers and everyday lives. As Chisholm and du Bois-Reymond (1993, 260) point out, "few things are certain and many choices are possible and ... it is not clear which options will be possible and impossible and for whom". The challenges of living in a divided society prevent young people from fully participating in consumer culture, but although they are recognised as important producers of subjective identities (Giddens 1991), their life experiences are characterised by uncertainties. What is left to people, the youth included, is to consume or dream of consuming as it creates illusions of belonging to different classes and escaping from social demands associated with the stigma of poverty (Van Bavel & Sell-Trujillo 2003).

In late modern capitalism, the impact of consumption brought a gradual decline in work values and, as a result, people's sense of identity in particular the youth, became attached to consumption patterns and not labour responsibilities (Bocock 2001, 109). Despite this finding, consumer society "remains socially divisive: inclusive and inviting of the affluent, mobile and able; exclusive of the poor, the isolated and the impaired" (Edwards 2000, 191). Nevertheless, developing

countries are impelled to integrate and participate in global consumer culture regardless of their own critical social and economic inequalities; as Appadurai (1996, 83) remarks, the "work" of consumption has become the "central preoccupation of otherwise very different contemporary societies".

3.4 Issues of class and education: Youth future prospects

Education is considered one of the main factors of social mobility (Souza & Lamounier, 2010), and the youth are primarily affected with unemployment and less participation in social and political processes, but also with lack of perspectives towards the future (Gacitúa-Marió 2005; Camarano, Mello, Pasinato & Kanso 2004; Jeffrey & McDowell 2004; Wyn & White 1997; Furlong & Cartmel 1997; Beck 1992; Giddens 1991). Their pathways are critically shaped by inequalities, mainly class, gender, and race; influenced by social, economic, and symbolic capital (Bell 2001, according to France 2007, 70; Jones 2002; Furlong & Cartmel 1997; Bourdieu 1984) thus, offering few realistic choices. Serious contrasts limit young people's life chances and educational projects, and continually reinforce and reproduce existing patterns of socioeconomic and cultural differentiations.

Consumption neither replaces, nor is an option to social classes in Brazil. Education is a critical factor and clearly embodies "the integrated nature of class and consumption, due to its critical position in reproducing social inequality. Class is clearly related with higher education and this is, in turn, a determining factor for granting access to higher level occupations (Bradley 1996; Marsh & Blackburn 1992, 184). In fact, the role of education in social stratification is undeniable, but its effect on class processes should be analysed in a large class structural context (Savage 2000). Several studies on social stratification and income distribution point to education as the key factor for social mobility, better jobs, and wages (cf Luna & Klein 2006; Gacitúa-Marió & Woolcock 2005; Quadros 2003, Reis & Schwartzman 2003; Savage 2000; Bradley 1996; Barros & Lam 1996; Pastore & Zylberstajn 1996; Marsh & Blackburn 1992). As Bourdieu (1984, 23) argues:

> *"Academic capital is the guaranteed product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school, considering that the efficiency of the*

school depends on the amount of cultural capital directly inherited from the family"

The above quotation supports the fact that a family's educational background is highly important in determining young people's education prospects (cf Wilska & Pedrozo 2007; Gayle, Berridge & Davies 2002; Andersen 2001; Burnhill, Garner & Mcpherson 1990). On the other hand, education provided for the poor in Brazil is characterised by heterogeneity, and contrasts are visible in geographical regions, educational systems, quality, material, and human resources, thus accentuating the inclusion/exclusion mechanism (Schwartzman & Reis 2005). As Luna and Klein (2006, 191) argue, disparities in literacy rate by race, ethnicity, region and gender remain immense in Brazil and reflect class boundaries. These serious contrasts continually reproduce and reinforce social and economic inequalities, while young people's opportunities are strongly affected by the complex correlation between these factors (Furlong & Kelly 2005).

Improvements in education, particularly in primary and secondary instruction, are an important goal to be pursued (Schwartzman 2005; Barros & Lam 1996) in Brazil, since the challenges to succeed and have access to public universities are even more difficult for students from public schools. As Archer, Hollingworth and Halsall (2007, 220) remark, barriers to HE [higher education] access among working class groups, are found within a multifaceted combination of personal, social, cultural, economic and institutional issues. The digital divide is an accurate example of the existing dynamic as ICT challenges require, in the very least, a basic educational level (Pedrozo 2011). A lack of computer literacy, cultural and economic factors affect disadvantaged youth, and may restrict their chances to participate in the increasingly demanding and globalised labour markets even more (Wilska & Pedrozo 2007). Education is the alternative to overcome disparities, social exclusion and enhance opportunities for the youth in Brazil, in such a way that they can determine their own futures.

4 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to identify structural factors involving consumption and its relation to youth, new media and social issues in general, and particularly in Brazil. Since its early elaboration, one of the main objectives was to discuss the social, economic, and cultural aspects of consumption through a historical and a sociological perspective, in contemporary society, and within the Brazilian context.

In section 1 the theoretical arguments provided a debate on modernity/postmodernity and the structure of consumer society, the role of sociology in acknowledging and investigating not only consumption, but also the youth as major elements of social change. Section 2 provided a review of the classical theoretical views of consumption and offered a discussion on the main exponents that are behind this study. Socioeconomic interpretations of consumption were also examined in order to understand the role of consumption in the emergence of a youth consumer culture, its development and outcomes. It has also been acknowledged that consumption, especially the consumption of new technologies, plays a very significant role in the process of youth identity construction. A portrait of youth consumption in different societies - Brazilian and Latin American, European and North American - was conducted in order to point out socioeconomic, educational, cultural, and demographic differences, as well as eventual similarities, concluding the central idea of this section; consumption seems to be fundamental in young people's lives, but restrictions of all kinds may impact them in different ways.

The discussion in section 3 focused on the social and economic inequalities of the Brazilian model. An introductory discussion on social class as a concept, followed by the emergence of the middle classes in Britain and the United States, provided the ground for the representation of the middle class in Brazil, particularly the so-called new middle class, which rapidly grew over the last few years and created new patterns of consumption. Globalisation issues were also considered in this chapter in order to show that the pressure for market liberalisation brought its own burden for developing countries, as far as the basic needs of the populations continued to be unattended, whilst consumption of material goods became vital to those same populations. Future prospects for young people include improvements in education in order to overcome inequalities, social exclusion and the digital divide.

4.1   Summary of Main Results

The objective here is to briefly highlight the findings of the research questions presented in section 1.2. The questions basically revolve around the same issues - consumption vis-à-vis youth, new media, and social issues such as education and the digital divide in a global perspective and, particularly in Brazil - although addressed from different viewpoints; from a more general perspective (Article 1) to a more specific one (Articles 3 and 4), as well as a cross-national comparison between Finland and Brazil (Article 2). The four articles came to the same conclusions - serious contrasts are accountable for reinforcing and reproducing inequalities in Brazil. Although there is a globalised society, elementary needs are not yet met. Youth face many challenges, but have unfortunately few opportunities.

In relation to the first research question: *What are the relationships between young people's use of ICTs and their consumption patterns and attitudes in Brazil?,* article 1 indicated that back in 2004, technology was a privilege for a minority in Brazil, and young people's consumption was more realistic. On the other hand, considering respondents' age in the survey and the fact that they live in a global society showed that despite all inequalities, similarities were strikingly similar to Finland's results. Similar conclusions were found in article 2 as the research question addresses: *What are the differences and similarities between youth in a developing (Brazil) and a developed (Finland) country in terms of ICT use, consumption patterns, identity construction and gender?* Since it is a cross-national comparison, it is clear that social, economic and cultural inequalities may become an obstacle in such studies; however, it was also clear that results are consistent with arguments about the global nature of consumption and ICT.

Concerning the third research question: *How do young people, particularly those of lower socioeconomic status, conceive consumption in Brazil?,* article 3, using different data indicated that inequalities jeopardise the future of the youth and bring uncertainties in regard to better education, labour, and citizenship. Similar results were also found in article 4, addressed by research question 4: *In which ways are the gaps brought upon by the diffusion of ICTs, particularly mobile phones and the Internet, among youth in Brazil related to other socioeconomic gaps (e.g., economic, educational, cultural, etc.)?* The answer to this question is fundamentally related to access to quality education as the digital divide is definitely linked to other kinds of inequality. Mobile phones are widespread, but Internet access still lags behind; currently, LAN houses are performing this role.

4.2 Theoretical Implications

This dissertation seeks to merge several topics for discussion in regard to consumption - information and communication technologies (ICTs), young people's sense of identity, inequalities, education and the digital divide - although it does not exhaust all these themes in just one study. The introduction and the four articles which are central to this study have argued that the emergence of new media - mobile phones, the Internet, the social networks - have created new consumption patterns and have become a valuable tool for identity construction, especially for young people. At the same time, new media, as any revolutionary innovation - not in the political sense, but as something radically new or different, have brought an unprecedented global change in terms of technology. However, ICTs gave rise to the digital divide, a new form of inequality, although correlated to the existing ones particularly in developing countries, affecting poor populations with little or no education and accentuating the gaps even more. A number of studies (Fortunati 2006; Räsänen 2006; Norris 2001) have argued that the digital divide is an indication of serious and more critical divides - social, economic, educational, and developmental that adds "a fundamental cleavage to existing sources of inequality in a complex interaction" (Castells 2001, 247).

The issues investigated in this study are influenced by several factors - social, economic, demographic, and educational; therefore, both research designs should allow for an analysis of such factors, either using the large sample or the individual interviews. Survey results for both quantitative studies (Brazil [Rio de Janeiro] and Brazil [Rio de Janeiro] Finland) and the qualitative study (Rio de Janeiro), demonstrated that different socioeconomic backgrounds have a great impact on the role of consumption and consumer cultures of young people, as they limit their aspirations. On the other hand, the findings are also consistent with arguments that young people show "similar" behaviours, no matter where they live and under what conditions, particularly if one refers to mobile phones, although their consumption motivations may be different. The present dissertation aims to shed light on the studied issues by offering a different perspective, adding, and thus complementing, the existing research on the same topics.

4.3 Limitations and Further Prospects

This study discussed the interrelation between consumption, young people as social actors, new media and the relevant issues related to it - identity construction, socioeconomic and educational/cultural inequalities and the digital divide in Brazil and developing countries in general - in the light of existing

theories. The four articles - three empirical studies and one using a theoretical framework offered a fair analysis, although not a comprehensive one. The use of quantitative data, as well as qualitative, contributed to an increased knowledge of the issues that were explored; however, the use of quantitative data aims to test hypotheses and leads to generalisations based on survey findings, and is applicable to large samples, which represent the studied populations. However, as human experience is so complex, it is difficult to control all variables involved in the study, frequently leading to unimportant results. In addition, quantitative approaches do not take into consideration participants' experiences and their attributed meanings. One additional issue concerns the objectivity of the approach; in fact, there is a subjective involvement, in part to the presence of the researcher, since he chooses the problem to be investigated and analyses results.

Qualitative approaches are more exploratory as, for instance, interviews which look for in-depth investigation and focus on the individual subject and his experiences and meanings; however, because of its subjective nature and the contexts and situations where it takes place, neither replications can be made, nor generalisations to larger contexts than the one being investigated. Thus, it is difficult to apply the usual standards of reliability and validity. In addition, two other problems can distort results - one is the presence of the researcher, which always affects participants, and the other regards the opinions of the researcher and the subjects that have to be exposed and identified to avoid bias (Burns 2000, 13-14).

The use of other methods in this study, in addition to qualitative and quantitative approaches, would have even better developed the understanding of the studied phenomena. For instance, the use of Time-Diary data, an important method for collecting data, providing unique insights about daily experiences for short periods of time, or even the Household Expenditure Survey, which collects very detailed information about household spending and income, would have broadened the scope and added new dimensions and views to ICT consumption. The same can be said about the use of longitudinal data, which would have generated compelling information about changes in young people's ICT consumption patterns and the advances of digital inclusion.

However, this study was limited to a comparison between two countries, different in many aspects, but the findings were nonetheless similar. In addition, the tools of the methods provided comparisons, although the sample was limited to a population segment from just one city, not the population in general; that is, the whole country. Therefore, this could be considered a data flaw, especially because the Finnish survey included sample from several cities of the country. There are, of course, problems with the representativeness of the sample and generalisations need to be treated with caution, but can be done in this case. On

the other hand, I should emphasise that I did not work with a convenience sample; I chose the high schools that participated in the project and the classes [of students] were selected by the directors of schools. The same process happened with individual interviews.

Further research using complementary approaches to study the same phenomena, and to measure young people's responses to the same issues presented in this particular research, would be valuable and rewarding as well as the inclusion of a wide range of rural areas for the same purpose. My research has primarily focused on urban youth and just one rural area, so it is important to broaden the regions within the same country for a thorough comparison. In addition, cross-national surveys for investigating the phenomena studied here, comparing advances and setbacks of developing countries like Africa or India, and developed countries as well would also be worthy of exploration.

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7 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND CONSUMPTION HABITS AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE FROM RIO DE JANEIRO

Sueila Pedrozo

Abstract

The development of the information technology and media in general have brought not only more information and communication, but also new consumer cultures as well as new kinds of consumer, especially among young people. In Brazil, the information society along with the Internet and the mobile phone is just beginning, since a large segment of the population still has no access to these devices due to factors as education and financial resources. Both this paper and the empirical research are based on the original survey *Consumer Cultures of Young People in the Changing Information Society,* carried on in 2001 in Finland and replicated in Rio de Janeiro (approximately the same population as in Finland), Brazil and two rural areas, between February and May 2003.

   The survey focused on the consumption habits and lifestyles of Brazilian teenagers 16-20 years old, and the data were collected from middle-level private schools, federal public schools and first year university courses. The sample included 736 students required to fill a questionnaire (60 questions) covering themes as the individual consumption and money use, mobile phone and the Internet, issues on environment and security. This survey aims to map young people's attitudes towards IT and consumption in Rio de Janeiro and identify eventual connections between them. A future use of the data might be a cross-cultural study between Finland and Brazil.

KEYWORDS: information technology, consumption, young people

7.1 Introduction

In a country of more than 175 million people, a GNP per capita of 2,955 € and deep contrasts; income distribution – one of the most perverse, lack of education, unemployment, and child labor (5,4 million children from 5 to 17

years of age); the IT explosion is really surprising. In the 90's cellular phones became very popular, reaching 30 million cell phones in 1999 and 38 million in 2003; for each 100 inhabitants, 20 have a phone, and it soon became a democratizing factor among the low income population, especially those working in the gray labor market sector.

Actually, according to Bernardo Sorj (2003, 22), mobile phone is an extraordinary example of the several dimensions to be considered, when analyzing the social impact of a product or service consumed in the contemporary society. However, even today, among those who can't have it, 50% are youngsters and the pre-paid plan accounts for a higher sales share of the companies, compared to the post-paid plan.

The Map of Exclusion, a survey done by *FGV* (Getulio Vargas Foundation, a government funded research institute) in April, 2003, shows that information technology is still a privilege for a small portion of the Brazilian population, due to factors like financial resources, education and lack of information. From its total, 150 million people do not have access to computers, and just 26 million are digitally included. Based on these numbers, Brazil is in a worldly position very close to India and South Africa.

Despite this fact, from 2000 to 2003 the access to computers grew about 50%; in other words, every four months one million people enter the digitally included group. Domestic social inclusion data depicts 12,46% of the Brazilian population as having access to a PC at home, and 8,31% to the Internet; 8,98% up to 15 years of age and 13,44 from 20–25 years of age, and 12,42% located in urban areas. Men are 48,89% of the users and in average terms, the age is 31 years old and the educational level is 8,72 years of study, relatively high if compared to the whole Brazilian population – 4,81 years.

The digitally excluded group displays a different scenario: men are 49,25% of the users, the average age is 28 years old and the educational level is 4,40 years of study. The relation between digital exclusion and income becomes clear from the information that 95% of the income tax returns are filed through the Internet, since lower income individuals are not required to file.

According to *UNESCO,* geographic disparities in literacy, low level of resources (below the necessary), which are also poorly spent, and very bad quality in terms of basic education are some of the main factors contributing to grade the country just above zero. A study from *INEP* (National Institute for Education and Research - a government funded institution) recently indicated that there was a performance decline of black students from 1995–2001; and this fact indicates that the unequal distribution among populations in Brazil is getting worse. The study also showed that black students entering school give up their studies much earlier than white counterparts, because education itself do not historically prize blacks. There is a diffuse racism that produces a

strong impact on black people's self-esteem. Criticism on that report pointed to its significance, but also to the absence of regional variables that should be added in order to represent the large differences among the regions of the country.

Research on IT and Brazilians has been conducted in recent times and digital inclusion has been discussed exhaustively. Rio de Janeiro has a young population of 412 395 inhabitants between the ages of 16–19 and, in the past few years, IT revolution has been responsible for the introduction of new products as well as new consumption habits. Mobile phones were adopted by young people for communication purposes, but also as a security device. In the 90's, telephony system was extremely precarious, since a large part of the population did not have access to it at a reasonable cost. The Internet, on the other hand, has not been adopted as fast, due to financial barriers as well as lack of knowledge about it.

Rio de Janeiro is located in the state of the same name, in the Southeastern region of Brazil. The region has one of the largest populations – more than 70 million inhabitants, a GDP per capita of R$8788.00 (4802,19 €) the highest if compared to Brazilian average of R$6486.00 (3544,26 €), and the city is the second largest one in the region, with a population above 6 million people, of which 15,51% have access to PCs. According to a 2001 survey from *IBGE* (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – a government institution) São Paulo state presents the greatest inclusion in the country, with 49,7% of its schools offering access to computers while Tocantins state (in the Northern region) displays just 1,9%.

In this study I kept the same structure of the questionnaire used in the original survey done in Finland in 2001 (Wilska 2002), with few adaptations to the local knowledge and reality of the observed population. A set of questions on personal security was added, due to the growing concern about urban violence/criminality in Rio de Janeiro, which contributes to a lifestyle change. According to *FGV*, the index of murders in Rio de Janeiro corresponds to 60 per each 100 000 people.

In the 90's IT began to extend its reach to larger segments of the society with the arrival of PCs, the Internet and mobile phones; however, in order to avoid a "digital apartheid" the State is supposed to supply, primarily, basic consumer services as water, power, and telephone fixed lines, for instance, at a reasonable cost as a way of providing for the population the needed access to new technology.

7.2 Theoretical Background

Unlike Finland, the first "real" information society in the world according to Castells (Wilska 2002), Brazil is a new society in terms of technology, and new configurations in terms of behavior cultures to arise; especially among young people. The industry development showed that all social strata in one way or another adopted the new media, especially the ones who work in the informal economy sector and the youngsters, because it is "cool", eases communication, have peers' approval, and strengthen the sense of belonging.

The Internet created new ways of participating, communicating and, even, new ways of social existence, making new subjectivities arise as connected subjects in the networks; no more spectators, but actors in the virtual world (e.g. Baudrillard 2003; Morin 2003; Turkle, 1995). The mobile phone provided a sensation of freedom and privacy, among youngsters, implemented with specific symbolic meanings used in identity construction, and characterizing a 'mobile culture'; that is, mobility is part of being young. It is to be here and there at the same time, to be connected and synchronized with the "peer group".

Alberto Melucci observes that the "action of [social] movements with youth participation is seen within the scope of symbols and communication" (Rodríguez 2002, 62). The arrival of the information technology contributed to create new consumer niches, to define new lifestyles, identities and consumption cultures, and to set out new ways of communicating. There is a "network society" generated by the information and communication revolutions, which in turn produce the expansion of PC's, the Internet and the new broadband services for information transmission; linking phones, TV's and computers. So, this "network society" combines production, diffusion and entertainment (op. cit., 164).

Some authors have expressed negative as well as positive concerns on media technology and the changing nature of childhood; that is, of its eventual 'disappearance' or the technology substituting the family or the school's role. Or even the electronic media blurring the frontier between childhood and adulthood, or robbing the true childhood (Sefton – Green 1998; Postman 2002; Wilska 2002). On the other hand, children are growing up in the computer culture and, as such, they are leading the way in this culture of simulation for the adults to follow. The "Net-Generation" as Tapscott calls it, matures earlier and shows more knowledge than the previous generations (Turkle 1995; Tapscott 1998). The fact is that computers are performing an important role in young people's lives; however, factors like social inequalities and economic factors, are determinants on who is going to be included or excluded in the information society.

Theorists like Beck (1992), Giddens (1991) and Bauman (1988) have already observed that through messages of goods and practices people possess and display, they are, actually, defining themselves. Appearances are manipulated; therefore, creating and sustaining a self-identity (Warde 1994, 878). Bauman also referred to the intrinsic volatility and instability of all or almost all identities, as the ability of "going shopping" in the supermarket of identities, which is the true way for the accomplishment of fantasies regarding them [identities]. This ability would allow one to easily create and undo identities (Bauman 2000, 98), but they might also become 'free-floating' signifiers and group identities could fragment, turning into temporary and ephemeral signs. In this case, individuals would identify with each other through shared lifestyles, or to any kind of subculture, which Maffesoli called 'neotribes' for example (Gabriel – Lang 1999, 89-93). The attachment to a group or the dressing of a particular lifestyle would describe anyone instead of his/her personal characteristics, and this relates to the way consumption became associated to the self and personality. To this respect, Munro (1996) talks about a "production model of the self" which would imply in the acquisition of goods as well as services as central to one's psychological well-being. So, constant consumption would contribute to self-growth and the like (Edgell – Hetherington – Warde, 248–273).

Many questions remain, as post-modern theories want us to see consumers as just identity-seekers. According to Gabriel and Lang (1995, 93) identity should deserve and get the respect of others and lead to self-love; otherwise, it is pointless and the debate around identity fragmentation and the consumer in search of an identity might turn into meaningless clichés. In this particular survey, I tried to analyze youth lifestyles and behavior regarding consumption and its relation to technology, in order to question if new consumption ways arise among young people, and how, since they are growing in an electronically mediated culture; therefore, reinforcing or subverting the existing consumption culture.

7.3   The Survey

This paper and the empirical research are based on the original survey *Consumer Cultures of Young People in the Changing Information Society,* carried on in Finland in 2001 (Wilska 2002) and reproduced in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It included the data collected between February and May 2003 with a sample of 736 students, 16–20 years of age, from private and public middle schools as well as first-year university level, and the average age was 17,2 years old. There were two main objectives: one, to compare data from both

countries due to its extraordinary social, economic, and cultural differences; second, to investigate attitudes towards consumption in several aspects in concern to Brazilian young people, specifically, Rio de Janeiro's young population. There are a few Brazilian academic studies dealing with youth public policies or youth violence, but almost none exploring the issues related to consumption, particularly to technology in the contemporary society.

The translation of the questionnaire followed the original, and the exception was a set of added questions on personal security and consumption, and the use of environmental logos adapted to local knowledge. As with any other western society, Brazilians, and in particular the youngsters, are witnessing an ever changing revolution in terms of information technology and mobile communication, which is responsible for new kinds of consumption, lifestyles, and consumer behavior. Marc Gobé calls the generation Y, the 'warp-speed generation' as they go faster and do more than the previous generations (Gobé 2001, 20). As this change in social, economic, and cultural patterns is quite new, however progressive, I tried to focus my attention on whether this new technology is already affecting the way young people express their own selves, or construct their own identities. Another argument regards the emergence of new consumer cultures, and if so, these cultures imply gender differences? An additional concern questions if the information technology will be an obstacle for the inclusion process due to factors like education and income, or it will include people socially as well as culturally along its fast development.

7.4   Work, Money and Consumption – Young People and Families

Youngsters, in this survey, regarded their families' financial situation as moderate (59,9%) and a very small percentage (1,4%) considered the family's financial resources as insufficient. The perception of their own situation showed that 40,3% had a moderate situation and 11,4% insufficient resources. More than half of the respondents (65,7%) live with both parents and a significant number live (27,6%) just with the mother (custody is awarded to mothers in most cases). An insignificant number of students live by themselves (1,9%) which can be explained by the Brazilian family structure – children stay in parental homes for an extended number of years because it is convenient, and also due to the high unemployment rate, particularly for young people. Most of them do not work at all (69,1%) and only 3,8% work regularly; consequently, parents are responsible for children's main expenses, as follows: house for 87.2% of the respondents, food for 91,1%, health for 87,4%, clothes for 78,7% and education for 83,3%, ranging from 'all' to

'most'. A recent newspaper article (April 2003) indicated that 3,6 million youngsters from 15–24 years old are looking for jobs.

Parents are also in charge, financially speaking, of all leisure activities, not considered basic: hobbies for 67,9% of the respondents, social life for 72,3% and travel for 76,1%. 71,4% of parents pay for all or most of the mobile phone expenses and 14,5% pay none of them (Table 1). Mobile phone serves a dual function: parents give it to their children as a personal security device and also to control them when they go out. In general, parents choose the pre-paid plan (cards with pre-fixed amount of money), as it keeps cell phone costs under control. The three most relevant daily expenses reported were entertainment/leisure, clothing and board (26,42%, 20,59% and 17,47% respectively).

Table 1. Percentage of Expenses of the Following Categories Paid for by Parents

	All	Most	Half	Little	Nothing
Housing	**82,1**	5,1	4,4	3,4	5,1
Food	**79,0**	12,1	5,2	3,1	0,6
Health care	**83,3**	4,1	2,9	7,1	2,5
Clothes	59,6	19,1	7,4	12,2	1,7
Car/transport	**71,5**	7,8	5,8	10,2	4,7
Mobile phone bill	66,1	5,3	3,6	10,5	14,5
Studying	**77,9**	5,4	3,9	6,3	6,5
Hobbies	56,4	11,5	10,9	12,7	8,5
Social life, entertainment	58,7	13,6	7,9	14,6	5,2
Travelling	66,1	10,0	5,5	9,6	8,9

Rio de Janeiro is a service-oriented city, with a small number of industries, except for the pharmaceutical and oil industries. Among the most common professions, it was reported 10,7% for engineers, 7,5% for businessmen, 5,7% for military officers, and 2,6% for medical doctors. The leading occupation for mothers is being a housewife (17,7%), followed by teachers (12,6%), medical doctors (4,9%), businesswomen (3,5%), bank clerks (2,3%).

Youngsters do not acknowledge other people's influences on their consumption or purchase decisions. Parents might be the exception, with respondents showing that they either "Frequently" or "Almost Frequently" (51,9%) do influence their decisions. Beside parents, news/magazines, friends, siblings and significant others have some influence, with 29,6%, 29,4%, 25,4% and 24,2% in the first two categories. They rejected the influence of sales personnel, music videos and celebrities; on the other hand, respondents exert some influence (34,7%) on parents' consumption; a similar rate. However, 52,2% responded "Never" or "Almost Never" for friends' influence,

which is a bit surprising indicating that peers' influence is not as strong as it is generally reported. Several studies as Childers and Rao (1992), for example, have noted that peer reference group may have a great importance in determining consumer decisions of their friends, as well as teenagers' preferences for products and brands are influenced by peers (Gunter – Furnham 1998, 22–29).

In terms of pocket money, half of the respondents received a monthly allowance, averaging R$115,20 (35,93 €) per month; however, the other half did not get an allowance. The explanation may be the fact that they ask parents for money when they need it, without a monthly amount. Leisure time expenses averaged R$66.30 (20,71 €) - trimmed mean. The majority of the respondents were able to save money (85,5%) and almost half of them (49,4%) had a particular purpose. Among the main purposes, 23,5% was for personal use; it seems that the purpose seems to be for them to use at their discretion, without parents interference. On the other hand, 14,5% did not save any money and 50,6% did not have any specific purpose.

In this survey, students were asked about the existence of durable goods/electronics in their households, as well as commercial services used by them and/or their families. Technically, households are reasonably equipped with the latest products as DVD, MP3, and digital cameras (these two are not produced in the local market; therefore, they are expensive) among others. 77% of the families have a car (average 1,3 cars), and 95% have at least one washer in the household. TV sets are also overwhelmingly present, with a percentage of 100% of all households, averaging 3,3 TVs per household. Home computers are being added to the existing durable goods at a fast pace, and in this study 89% have at least one, and 81% have one Internet connection at the minimum (Table 2). Youngsters' own spaces are fairly equipped with electronics; both CD player categories (table/portable) had a relevant percentage – 91% and 62%. Only four youngsters had their own car, all others acknowledged the family car as theirs.

Table 2. Ownership of Durable Goods in Youngsters' Households

	Households (parental) owning at least one (N=736) (%)	Average per household	Youth owning at least one (N=736) (number)	Youth owning at least one (N=736) (%)
Car	77	**1,30**	4	0,5
Boat	4	0,05	2	0,3
Motor bike	11	0,13	29	3,9
TV	**100**	**3,34**	170	23,1
VCR	**94**	1,53	84	11,4
Cable TV	63	1,14	61	8,3
PC	**89**	1,25	191	26,0
Laptop	12	0,14	6	0,8
Games	65	0,96	235	31,9
Internet connection	**81**	1,03	144	19,6
Wireless Internet	12	0,18	44	6,0
Palm Pilot	6	0,07	8	1,1
Video camera	40	0,45	19	2,6
Digital camera	18	0,21	27	3,7
CD Player	**91**	1,81	229	31,1
Portable CD	62	0,83	237	32,2
DVD player	43	0,51	38	5,2
MP3	17	0,20	44	6,0
Washer	**95**	1,05	5	0,7
Dishwasher	26	0,28	0	0,0
Microwave	71	0,77	4	0,5
Coffee maker	69	0,81	2	0,3

Regarding commercial services (Table 3), one has the impression that some respondents would choose an option in a random way, for being ashamed of not using the service, or maybe upset for being asked. This conclusion is based, sometimes, on the family's income or the father's occupation that did not allow certain expenses. The most common services listed under the word frequently were related either with entertainment/leisure, sports practice/gym, health insurance or education/language instruction; the ones used sometimes gives a different picture, with higher percentages for almost all categories with few exceptions. It means that families' income allow several expenses from time to time, not at a frequent basis. The category never shows that more expensive services have high percentages as spa (85%), travel abroad (59%), concerts (58%) or even car wash (25%).

Table 3. Commercial Services Use – Young People/Family (%)

	Frequently	Sometimes	Never
Packaged tours abroad	3	30	59
Tours in Brazil	7	46	42
The use of taxi	29	60	9
Movies	62	35	2
Eating out	43	53	3
Cafes, fast-food restaurants	48	44	5
Bars, pubs	42	52	5
Discos, night clubs	22	50	24
Theatre	10	55	30
Concerts	5	27	58
Exhibitions	8	56	30
Fairs	12	61	22
Sports services	39	44	13
Private education courses	53	27	16
Private leisure time courses	31	37	26
Private health care	59	19	17
Gym, massage,etc.	38	29	28
Beauty treatment	18	43	32
Spas	1	5	85
Private child care	4	7	80
House cleaning	24	18	50
Sewing, dress making	4	36	52
Catering services	3	31	58
Renovating services	8	67	19
Machinery repair and maintenance	13	71	11
House move services	3	42	46
Interior decoration services	7	31	54
Garden planning	3	14	73
Gardening, planting	5	17	71
Car repair and maintenance	19	58	19
Car wash	32	40	25

7.4.1 Respondent as Consumer/Individual Consumption

Respondents were asked to analyze themselves as consumers in some categories as individualism, impulsiveness, trendiness, thriftiness and environment consciousness and their opposites (Table 4). The percentages show moderate results with no extremes at all. Using a scale of 1 to 5 (1= agree with statement at left, 5= agree with statement at right, and 2, 3, 4= partially agree) the numbers ranged from 1,99 to 4,11, that is, students placed themselves in the middle categories. It means that respondents were able to save money, but they paid attention to new trends. They did not show themselves as impulsive buyers and considered themselves neither as mass consumers nor as individualists and, they indicated some kind of concern for the environment.

Table 4. Percentages of self-perceived consumer typologies – 1–5 scale

	Mean	1	2	3	4	5	
Money slips through my fingers	**4,11**	5	5	16	22	52	I manage to save something
Trend-conscious	**2,91**	13	22	40	13	12	"Laggard"
Impulsive buyer	**3,74**	5	10	24	26	34	Prudent Consumer
Mass consumer	**3,27**	6	13	47	17	17	Individualist
Environmentally conscious	**1,99**	42	27	24	5	3	"Free Rider"

It is worth noticing that there were gender differences when youngsters stated their preferences in this question. In the trend-consciousness dimension, twice as much girls than boys declared to be trend conscious, and the opposite happened in the other side of the scale. This shows that girls are more willing to admit that they are trend conscious than boys. In the dimensions impulsiveness and thriftiness girls displayed a higher percentage in the extreme categories.

7.4.2 Mobile Phone and Consumption Styles

Since mobile phone became an essential part in people's lives, the same can be said in respect to youngsters. It was never a simple gadget, since it became a feature of one's lifestyle as well as one's identity, since it was easy to

personalize with logos, tones, and accessories. It is now an intrinsic part to young people's consumption, not necessarily a different kind of consumption.

According to the results, 78,7% had a mobile phone; for 93,5% of them it was either the first, second or third phone (trimmed mean 1,9 mobile phones). Two years and a half was the average time of use, the same as in Finland (see Wilska 2003), and the bills averaged R$38,50 (2,03€). It is important to notice that 63,7% prefer the pre-paid plan (card) and the other 23,4% of the respondents shared the post-paid (bill by the end of the month usually paid by parents), limit of calls 9% and other plan(s) 4%. Respondents reported that they receive an average of 3,66 calls and also make an average of 3,11 calls. In respect to text messages they receive 1,61 and send 1,27. Both results are far inferior to the ones found in the Finnish study (see Wilska 2002). The most relevant phone services used by the respondents include: call wait (33,4%), home line (61%), mailbox (66,7%), text messages (86,6%), alarm/calculator (81,4%), new logos (68%) and text message service (80,9%).

A Likert scale 1–5 was used to measure attitudes (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree). Attitudes were then analyzed by factor analysis, using principal component extraction (table 5). Factor analysis does not test hypotheses using a large set of variables, it tries to summarize the data using a small set of components. In this set of questions describing the mobile use, a three-factor solution was also used in order to ease the data comparison. The principal components, <u>Addict User</u>, <u>Fashion Oriented</u>, and <u>Practical/Thrifty Oriented</u> explained about 38,65% of the total variance. For the first factor, the Addict User, attitudes emphasizing intensive use of cell phone as a gadget got high loadings. It means that this young individual writes many messages, and likes to get phone calls as well as text messages; sometimes makes phone calls with no particular purpose. He/she uses the mobile in public places and feels uncomfortable if the phone is not with him/her, and in the future, he/she will use even more the mobile communication. For a person like this, it might be difficult to manage the phone bills, since more use is always preferable to less.

The second factor, the Fashion-Oriented Individual, looks for trendy models on the cutting-edge of the latest technology. At the same time, it has to fit a particular lifestyle, the individual's image. It is important to receive many calls and text messages and to display an Internet connection. This young person also feels uncomfortable if the mobile is not around and he/she cares about the operator's image – which one is more fashionable? On the other hand, he/she is not worried about the environment, as far as he/she is not concerned about what happens to old mobile phones. The third and last factor shows the features of a practical and thrifty young individual. For him/her a mobile phone is not a gadget; it is to be used when one needs it, and does not

have to be fancy as price factor is something to be considered. This device will be used even more in the future, because of its countless advantages.

Table 5. Factor Analysis of Mobile Phone Use and Young People

	Factor 1 Addict User	Factor 2 Fashion oriented	Factor 3 Practical / Thrifty	h2
Mobile Phone is necessary only for connecting people and organizing things			0.514	0.311
I often make phone calls without any particular purpose	0.448		-0.385	0.377
I write many text messages	0.624			0.438
I use very much the fixed line at home	0.373			0.155
The cheapest model is good enough for me		-0.607	0.328	0.492
Three years old mobile phone looks too old-fashioned for me		0.734		0.546
It is important for me that the mobile phone is the latest technology and "posh"		0.808		0.667
I often change logos and/or ringing tones	0.464			0.274
It is important for me to receive many phone calls and text messages	0.631	0.404		0.565
I often use my mobile phone in public places (bus, street, cafes)	0.583			0.346
It is important for me an internet connection on my mobile phone		0.509		0.314
It is important for me that my phone fits my clothing style and general image		0.620		0.463
I keep checking for possible phone calls and text messages all the time	0.690			0.556
I feel very uncomfortable if, for any reason, I don't have my phone with me	0.583	0.359		0.470
I often have difficulties in paying my mobile phone bills	0.313			0.121
I don't care with what happens to old mobile phones		0.363		0.164
I will probably use the mobile phone even more in the future	0.423		0.367	0.327
Price is the most important issue when choosing a phone			0.703	0.510
Some operators or connection types are more "trendy" than others		0.429		0.247
Eigenvalue	3.032	3.011	1.300	
Explained (%)	15.956	15.846	6.844	38.646

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.= 0.855 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 1946.22 Sig=.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a.Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

These three "dimensions" can be used to analyze individuals. For example, one particular person can be highly "Fashion Oriented", meaning that he/she is deeply aware of appearance, but also highly addict to the phone as a gadget. It

is a way of finding non-observed underlying dimensions of human behaviour and using this set of questions to measure them. The next logical step is to further analyze the data, by creating and saving standardized sum variables representing the three dimensions, which were weighted by the loadings of at least +/- .30, and checking how independent variables as gender and individual attitudes towards consumption affected them.

Separate ANOVA analyses were run for each factor, but a low explanatory power of the independent variables was found (maximum of 10,2% for the first factor). Gender, as well as a score representing individual consumption attitudes (Trendiness, 1-Trend Conscious, 5- Laggard), a self assessment of the individual's wealth (1-Very much, 5-Very sparsely) and the type of school (Private, public) were used as independent variables attempting to explain the factors. Gender was statistically significant for the Addict Factor, at the p<.001 level, however, with a small to moderate effect of 2,4% (eta squared). Interestingly, it showed a negative value for boys, relative to girls, meaning that boys seem to be less addicted than girls. Back to the data, girls tend to "feel uncomfortable when they don't have their cell phones on them", they write more text messages, they "keep checking for messages and phone calls" and "often change logos and tones" to a higher degree than boys. Trendiness was also significant for this factor, at the p<.05 level, with a moderate effect (5,1% eta squared), with trend conscious subjects being more "addict" than "laggards". The independent variable found most statistically significant for the Fashion Oriented factor was Trendiness, at the p<.001 level and a moderate effect (6.1%), with the most self-declared trend conscious subjects being more Fashion Oriented. Self-declared perception of wealth ("do you have money?") also plays a statistically significant role, with students that have "very much" money being more Fashion Oriented. The third factor, described as Practical/Thrifty had only 6,2% of its variance explained, and presented a significant relationship for the self declared perception of wealth (at the level of p<.01), with the higher end of income being less practical/thrifty than the lower end. Another significant independent variable for this factor was the type of school, with students from private schools being less practical/thrifty than the ones from public schools. Both explanatory variables probably work as proxies for wealth, meaning that youngsters from higher income families pay less attention to practicalities and to the low price of the products/services.

Comparing the results of the Finnish and the Brazilian surveys, it is interesting to note that gender was not significant for the "trendy" dimension, apparently indicating that boys and girls are equally inclined to observe trends and fashions in Brazil; while in Finland (see Wilska 2002), girls displayed less of that tendency than boys. Another important difference was the variable

"impulsiveness" affecting with high statistical significance all the three dimensions in Finland, while being not significant in Brazil. Environmental consciousness was also not important in Brazil, but it was at the $p<0.05$ level for "trendy" and "thrifty" dimensions in Finland.

Table 6. Connection Between Mobile Phone Use Styles, Gender and Consumer Types Analyzed by Multiple ANOVAs

			Factor 1 Addict User	Factor 2 Fashion oriented	Factor 3 Practical
			B	B	B
1.Gender					
	1 Boy	159	-0.31		
	2 Girl	168	0(a)		
F			**7.66****	**2.95**	**1.31**
54.Trendiness					
	1 Trend conscious	50	0.53	0.57	
	2	74	0.23	0.19	
	3	125	-0.07	-0.01	
	4	43	-0.15	-0.30	
	5 Laggard	35	0(a)	0(a)	
F			**4.28****	**5.10*****	**0.60**
24.Do you have money?					
	1 Very much	8		1.08	-0.83
	2 Much	65		0.50	-0.43
	3 Moderately	144		0.24	-0.27
	4 Sparsely	84		0.45	-0.71
	5 Very sparsely	26		0(a)	0(a)
F			**1.58**	**2.90***	**3.62**
Type of school					
	1 Private	224			-0.29
	2 Public	103			0(a)
F			**0.11**	**2.92**	**5.18**
	$100R^2$		10.2	10.0	6.2

a. The value is zero, because it is a reference category

$p<0.001$*** $p<0.01$** $p<0.05$*

7.5 Young People, Information Technology and Consumption

The new technology brought computers and along with them, the Internet, which transformed the way we are, the way we think and behave, and created an entirely new way of communicating. Edgard Morin (2003) talks about interconnected individuals in the networks, where exchanges, reciprocities and

liberties are bound to happen. In post-modern societies, identities are no more fixed structures; they move freely or, as Featherstone puts it, people do not look for a single identity or image but as many as possible to match different moods (Featherstone 1991, 27). And the Internet became an important social lab for experimenting with the constructions and reconstructions of the self according to Turkle (1995, 180).

For the young generation the Internet as well as the mobile became essential parts of their lives. The results showed that 40,5% used the Net for some time per month, 21,3% once a day, and 0,6% never used. Out of 736 respondents, 104 reported they do not have a PC; 87,8% had access at home and the other small percentages are distributed among accessing at school (4,3), friend's house (3,1), and somewhere else (4,0). The preferred sites included search for information (99,2%), entertainment (95,3%), email (93,7%), chat/ICQ (83,2%), and newspapers/magazines (72,5%), all ranging from 'frequently' to 'sometimes'. In certain way, one finds out that young people master quite easily the transformations that occur in society and, especially with the digital revolution, one concludes that they are accomplished and sophisticated users. The Internet as a social space also attracted the youngsters; 54,2% mentioned that they made friends through the Net, and 45,8% not at all.

The same technique (Factor Analysis) was used to measure the relation between mobile phones and lifestyles was applied in this section - Youngsters and Information Technology. Attitudes were evaluated using a Likert scale (1=strongly agree, 5= strongly disagree) and after that a factor analysis statistics was performed (Table 7). With a Varimax Extraction, the solution chosen was a four-factor analysis, and the result explained 46,8% of the total variance. The factors were Skilled User, Suspicious, Pessimistic, and Gadget Enthusiast. The first factor showed high loadings for the statement "I am very skilled user of IT" and for other questions expressing enthusiasm for, willingness to work with and praise to the importance of information technology. The suspicious user finds IT uninteresting, is against it, and neither understands nor wants to learn about it, being afraid that he/she will drop out of its fast development. The pessimistic sees environmental problems, undue interference, increased inequality and high cost associated with IT. Finally, the gadget enthusiast sees IT as a solution for environmental problems, likes the technology, while not being an expert on it, and thinks that it is expensive because he/she would like to use more of it.

Table 7. Attitudes towards IT and information society

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	
	Skilled User	**Suspicious**	**Pessimistic**	**Gadget Enthusiast**	**h²**
IT is unavoidable, but is not interesting		0.417		-0.336	0.321
I am a very skilled IT user	0.399	-0.431			0.437
I am against IT		0.546		-0.374	0.444
I would like to get a job with IT	0.638				0.449
I am very enthusiastic about tech innovation	0.437	-0.384		0.393	0.493
I use IT very much in social life	0.376	-0.386			0.326
IT rules our lives too much			0.623		0.398
IT makes our life easier	0.465	-0.312			0.421
IT increases environmental problems			0.703		0.501
IT increases inequality			0.679		0.470
I don't understand anything about IT		0.746			0.591
I am sick and tired about all the fuss on IT		0.753			0.614
IT may produce solutions for environmental problems				0.534	0.331
I am afraid I'll drop out of rapid development of IT		0.689			0.528
It is important for me to own the latest technical innovations	0.707				0.526
I will get a digital TV as soon as possible	0.650				0.516
I will use IT a lot in the future	0.628				0.477
IT and digital devices are too expensive			0.408	0.580	0.503
I dream of getting rich in IT business	0.728				0.549
Eigenvalue	3.064	2.744	1.730	1.355	
Explained (%)	16.126	14.444	9.107	7.130	46.806

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy=0.826 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity= 2701.6 Sig=.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

[a] Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

The attitude factors were further analyzed by turning the factors into standardized sum variables that were weighed by the loadings of at least +/- .30. Separate ANOVA analysis were performed to assess the explanatory importance and significance of factors like Gender, Type of School (private vs. public), individual consumption features of the respondents and a two category Consumer Index, based on the declared ownership of durable goods. Gender was significant at the level p<.001, with an F value of 54,97, for the "Skilled User" factor, meaning that boys are more "Skilled" than girls regarding IT. Type of school (public, private) was also significant, at the p<.05 level (Students from private schools are more skilled than the ones from public schools). Trendiness was a significant factor for the "Suspicious" dimension, at the p<.05 level, and the Consumer Index was significant at the p<.001 level, providing an indication that ownership of durable goods, acting as proxy of income, had a significant effect on suspicion: the lower the income, the more IT suspicious.

Only Gender was significant at the p<.01 level for the Pessimistic, with boys being less pessimistic than girls, and Impulsiveness was significant at the .05 level for the Gadget enthusiast, with Impulsive subjects being less Gadget enthusiasts. In the Finnish study, Gender was statistically significant at the p<.001 level for all factors, while here, it was significant at that level just for the Skilled User, and at the p<.01 level, for the Pessimistic User. This is surprising, considering that the Finnish society has a higher degree of gender equality than Brazil, a country where the "macho" domination is normally taken for granted. It might represent, though, that other variables not considered in the study may be very relevant, somehow reducing the explanatory power of the gender. For example, the p<.001 significance of the Consumer Index variable in the Suspicious dimension might indicate the need of more variables measuring income and social stratification for Brazil.

Table 8. Connection Between Attitudes Towards IT and Information Society, Gender, School, Money and Consumer Types Analyzed by Multiple ANOVAs

		Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
		Skilled User	Suspicious	Pessimistic	Gadget Enthusiast
		B	B	B	B
Gender					
1 Boy	324	0.56		-0.23	
2 Girl	330	0(a)		0(a)	
F		54.97***	1.65	8.54**	0.73
Type of school					
1 Private	420	0.16			
2 Public	234	0(a)			
F		4.07*	0.01	1.26	2.44
Impulsiveness					
Impulsive 1 buyer	35				-0.37
2	67				-0.35
3	154				-0.25
4	174				-0.21
Prudent 5 buyer	224				0(a)
F		2.35	0.87	0.11	2.66*
Trendiness					
Trend 1 conscious	84		-0.56		
2	140		-0.27		
3	268		-0.32		
4	81		-0.24		
5 Laggard	78		0(a)		
F		2.19	3.14*	0.91	0.63
Consumer Index					
1 Lower	312		0.29		
2 Higher	342		0(a)		
F		2.66	13.35***	2.90	3.24
$100R^2$		11.9	5.1	2.9	3.1

7.6 Consumption, Security and Environmental Consciousness

In this study, results have shown that security is an important issue in Brazilian large cities and, in recent years, people started to become more aware and to change ways of living due to the growing violence and fear. Just five questions gave the approximate dimension of the problem regarding, especially, young people. A cross-tabulation between genres, schools, and

areas of living gave the following significant results: more girls than boys changed consumption habits, like going out to any place, or anytime; more students from private schools than public ones and living in the north-center area of the city. When asked if they preferred to go out alone, it was found a higher percentage for boys than for girls, for students from public than private schools, and living in the north-center region. In relation to going out with peers, the tabulation showed the following: more girls than boys prefer the company of a group, they belong to private schools and the highest percentage comes out from the south-west area.

The next question addresses the use of mobile phone to get in touch with parents and a higher percentage corresponds to girls than to boys; they belong to private schools, and they live in the southwest are (the highest purchasing power). It is worth noting that 52,2% of the youngsters from the rural area communicate with parents; however, 26,9% do not and the explanation is linked to the fact that they do not have as many mobiles as the ones from the urban areas. Respondents reported that they preferred going to shopping malls as a measure of precaution than to any other place, but results were not very different. Changes due to violence happened in all schools in a high degree; overall about half of the students changed in their habits. Changes were higher for girls, studying in private schools, and urban areas. Anyway, one observes that there was a change in terms of keeping the same habits or even lifestyles.

A question on environmental consciousness was added to the survey as follows: "Consuming in a conscious way is part of your life values?" and the positive result (88,1%) was a bit surprising, because it is reported that students do not read enough, and have a limited vocabulary, and have trouble interpreting meanings, in general. Respondents had difficulty in many questions related to this topic. The majority of youngsters (53,6%) ignore if their families buy biologically grown products and they never heard about it (77,3%). It is worth mentioning that these products are arranged in a separate section at the supermarkets, but they are expensive. The 'green products' showed a different percentage: 20,8% do not know if their families buy it and do not know the products (64,3%); however, 46,0% buy occasionally, and 25,8% do it regularly. There is a program for recycling materials, at municipal level, but it has yet to be implemented in the whole city. The percentage ranged from 4,8% - people separate everything to 53% - do not separate anything. Students (52,4%) also reported that they do not buy pirate or second-hand clothes, and the reason for 51,2% was the suspicion about quality; however, 41,5% buy it occasionally. Other products, like CDs or books attract 52,1%.

When asked about the future, the respondents depicted a very interesting picture. Around 85% of the youngsters stated that they have high hopes of

being well established in life, with a very good job and financial success, and 92% will likely own a house and a car. Money and material goods, the core incentive of consumer society, are on the top of the mind for these youngsters. However, family life and values, as well as tradition are still highly regarded as far as they become an important project to pursue for 72% of the youngsters.

7.7   Conclusions

This survey was a reproduction of the study conducted in Finland in 2001 (see Wilska 2002), aiming at a cross-cultural comparison, and investigated the relation between young people's consumption habits and information technology; the use of mobile phone, and the Internet; the student as an individual consumer and his/her relation to money, durable goods, environmental issues and personal security.

Youngsters are incorporating, in a fast pace, both information and technology to their lifestyles; however, one cannot say that identity construction is totally dependable on IT. Characteristically of this group, youngsters are easily adaptable to postmodern and globalized times: they show free-floating identities, with interchangeable selves, making it possible to affiliate with different groups, with no commitment whatsoever and any new device is welcome.

Although consumption is an important and visible component, responsible for a major change in social, cultural and economic terms in Brazilian society, few people can really have access to modern technology and material goods in general. In the first place, there is a lack of basic goods as healthcare and urban infrastructure, inequalities in income distribution and growing unemployment, which generate difficulties for the democratization of services.

The factor analysis for the data of the present study was surprisingly similar to the Finnish data (Wilska 2002), with approximately the same factors found in both studies for cell phone and IT analysis, and comparable loadings for the questions. The similarity is particularly striking if we consider that the subjects of the surveys come from very different social, ethnic, economic and cultural backgrounds. The similarity may come from their age, and to the fact that they live in a global society and are exposed to the same information that comes from the Internet, MTV and consumption products.

Some differences are displayed in the relationship between the factors extracted and the explanatory variables used. Some questions may have not been completely understood by the group tested in Rio, like the attitudes towards the environment, and the consumption of some kind of goods that are

not mass consumed in Brazil. The "welfare society" might be an explanatory factor for the differences found, and must be closely related to social stratification, economic and cultural inequalities and resulting information exclusion. A direct comparison of the survey data might be used in a possible study of the social dimensions of the information revolution, in order to explore the differences and similarities in a more thorough way.

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II

ARTICLE 2: Wilska, T-A. - Pedrozo, S. (2007). New technology and young people's consumer identities: A comparative study between Finland and Brazil. *Young,* Vol. 15 (4), 343-368.

New technology and young people's consumer identitites

A comparative study between Finland and Brazil

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Abstract

This article investigates new definitions of the self and identity vis-à-vis digital media and consumption styles among young people. The research is based on an empirical survey conducted in Finland in 2001 and re-done in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2003–04. The main goal of this study is how information and communication technology (ICT) relates to young people's consumer identities in two very different countries. In Finland, equal access to new technology is widespread. In Brazil, digital exclusion is predominant due to social inequalities in income distribution. The results showed that young people's use of and attitudes towards ICT are surprisingly similar in both countries, and in both countries we found connections between consumer identities and ICT use and related attitudes. However, in Brazil, the father's educational level explained attitudes towards ICT better than consumer identities did. In Finland, gender was a more powerful determinant than in Brazil, which is a bit surprising. However, social and cultural differences make this comparison a bit difficult and the results must be treated with caution.

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W e cannot imagine our daily lives without media and ICT, and new media not only changes existing leisure options but existing practices also mediate the appropriation of new media into daily life (Livingstone, 2003: 2–3). Information and communication technology has changed lifestyles of young people more than lifestyles of other age groups. Thus, an interesting question is how young people construct their identities in the technological world, since relationships are more and more mediated by the presence of computers and mobile communication devices.

During the transitional process into adulthood, young people experiment with different identities, with disregard to the way the existence of factors like class, gender, and ethnicity construct identity as pointed out by Abercrombie (quoted in Gabriel and Lang, 1995: 89). However, it is unlikely that young people's identity-creation processes are similar in all cultures, for both genders, and in different socio-economic groups. And although mobile phones and the Internet are global phenomena, their effect on young people's identities, lifestyles and consumer cultures should not be exaggerated, either. Also, the 'digital divide' aspect is often forgotten when talking about young people's 'global' lifestyles and consumption. The digital divide is a term used to refer to the gap between those who have access to technology and those who have not. Social gaps in society cause the digital divide, but the digital divide, in turn, may intensify existing social gaps and create new ones (Cooper and Weaver, 2003). Digital divides may also exist between societies. In Third World countries, there are a lot of people who have more limited access to new technology than most people in industrialized countries. In this article, we explore the connection between new technology and the consumption styles of young people in Finland and Brazil.

The main issues on which this article aims to empirically shed light, using survey data on Finnish and Brazilian young people aged 16–20 years, include questions of how the use and importance of new technology differ in two countries with extremely different social, economic and cultural conditions. We also ask how new technology affects young people's consumption styles. How do young people express themselves and build their identities through ICT? We also ask if there are notable differences between genders in the use of new technology in the two countries, and search for factors that may cause a digital divide inside the countries, such as income and education.

INFORMATION SOCIETY AND CHANGING CONSUMER IDENTITIES

Young people's consumption styles represent many elements that theorists argue to be typical of today's 'postmodern' lifestyles and consumption. Young people grow up experiencing a series of rites of passages associated with a consumer society. Particularly in the Western world, and also in urban areas in the Third World, they are socialised to regard money and consumption as the entrance door to life (De Castro, 2006). Therefore, the relationship between consumer

lifestyles and young people's identities is a social and cultural construction (Miles, 2000: 107–52). Postmodern theories suggest that the identity project has become a reflexive process in which the self is negotiated in terms of choice among a plurality of lifestyle options (Featherstone, 2001; Giddens, 1991). According to these theories, there is also a need to constantly rebuild identity. The discussion on identity formation in postmodernity leads to references of multiple or fragmented identities, instead of unitary or unchangeable ones (Featherstone, 2001; Turkle, 1996: Slater, 2002). Despite the fact that postmodern everyday life is being 'aestheticised' (Featherstone, 1991), postmodern consumption is seen as a means of identity-formation, self-expression, creativity, or even art (du Gay, 1996; Gabriel and Lang, 1995; Giddens, 1991).

Unpredictability and the blurring of traditional conventions are typical of *both* postmodern consumption *and* constantly developing new technology. Moreover, the portrait of a postmodern consumer also includes eternal youthfulness or at least the pursuit of it. More and more, young people's lifestyles and consumption patterns determine the consumption trends of the *whole population*. Similarly, the time spent at work or studying is expected to contain more and more play, entertainment, and adventure (du Gay, 1996; Langman, 1992; Mäenpää, 2003). Digital media shows and the cyber-worlds of new technology respond perfectly to the need for play and entertainment. However, these media spectacles have been criticized for their alleged adverse effects on young people, such as isolation and false consciousness caused by the virtual world. Social inequalities or the digital divide are also questioned with ICT introduction (Livingstone, 2003; Postman, 1999; Sefton-Green, 1998).

The use of mobile phones has also caused public concern. The combination of telecommunication in private on the one hand, and hanging around in public places on the other, has become a new, appealing way of keeping up social networks for young people (Gillard et al., 1998: 149; Mäenpää, 2001: 122). This has reduced the possibility for parents to control their communication. Due to youngsters' personal mobile phones, parents do not necessarily know their children's friends anymore. Also, the use of other ICT products is more 'private' than before. Young people often use their computers in their own rooms, in which they also watch their own TVs and videos (Coogan and Kangas, 2001; Suoranta and Lehtimäki, 2003; Wilska, 2002a).

However, there are also more optimistic views about the effects of information technology on children, as, for instance, according to Tapscott (1998: 7–9), the new 'Net-Generation' or 'warp-speed generation' (Gobé, 2001) matures earlier and is more knowledgeable than any of the previous generations. But, of central importance, is the diversity of ways in which children and young people appropriate and use ICT that leads to new forms of youth culture (Rushkoff, 1996; Sefton-Green, 1998; Turkle, 1996; Tapscott, 1998). The differences between genders regarding the use of new technology are often reported to decrease; for example, in Scandinavian countries, women and girls spend as much time with ICT as men and boys do. According to the research of Stastistics Finland, Finnish women use

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the Internet more in their work than men do (Nurmela, 2001; Nurmela et al., 2000). However, there is a lot of divergent evidence on this. According to several studies, the digital divide between genders still persists and many more women and girls than men and boys are afraid of ICT (for example, Cooper and Weaver, 2003; Oksman, 1999; Schumacher and Morhan-Martin, 2001; Suoninen, 2003; Wilska, 2003; Zhang, 2005).

As a result of the 'Net-Generation's' growing influence, the impact of young people on consumer cultures has increased, not only in the manifestation of consumption styles but also in their production. This is particularly visible in young people's innovative ways of using mobile phones and other new technology (Wilska, 2003). According to some theories, when moving from childhood to adulthood, most rites of passage are for sale at the marketplace. One can even argue that the actual significance of youth as a stage in life lies in the ability to act as an independent consumer in the market. (Griffin, 1997; Miles, 2000: 106.) Today, young people reach this stage earlier than before, and the discovery of one's 'own style' becomes important at a very early age. Thus, the pressures to keep up with 'legitimate' styles have never been as strong as they are now (for example, Klein, 1999; Quart, 2003).

THE PRODUCTS OF NEW TECHNOLOGY IN FINLAND AND BRAZIL

In Finland, mobile communication as well as other information and communication technologies (ICT) are undoubtedly a very important part of young people's everyday life. In general, ICT has greatly affected Finnish people's lives during the past decades. According to Manuel Castells, Finland is the first 'real' information society in the world (Castells, 2000: 72). In the European Union, Finland was in fifth place with regard to the number of Internet connections in 2001 (Kuure, 2003: 16). In 2005, 67 per cent of Finnish households owned a computer and 47 per cent had a high-speed Internet connection (Statistics Finland, 2006).

The percentage of young ICT users has been remarkably high in Finland for some time. Already in 2001, about 75 per cent of young people aged 15–24 used the computer at least weekly and almost 60 per cent of young people used the Internet and sent emails frequently. Only 1 per cent of Finnish young people had never used a computer. For comparison, the percentage of young non-users was five in France and Belgium, eight in Germany, ten in Great Britain and 15 in Portugal in 2001 (Kuure, 2003: 16–9).

In terms of mobile phones' diffusion, Finland is undoubtedly the number one in the world, and particularly among young people. In 2005, 95 per cent of Finnish households owned at least one mobile phone. (Statistics Finland, 2006). Already in 2001, most households had as many mobile phones as there were members of the household above the age of 10 (Kuure, 2003: 14). In 2004, the number of mobile connections was two times higher than the number of fixed phone lines (Statistics Finland, 2005). As to usage, according to Eurobarometers, 93 per cent of Finnish young people aged 15–24 used a mobile phone regularly

in 2001 (Kuure, 2003: 19). At the same time over a third of Finnish children aged 7–10 had their own mobile phone and about 70 per cent of them were allowed to use one regularly (Suoranta and Lehtimäki, 2003: 33–4).

In Brazil, the survey 'Mapa da Exclusão Digital' (2003) from Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV), points out that information technology is still a privilege for a small number of the Brazilian population. Factors such as financial resources, lack of education and information contribute to digitally exclude people from the ICT revolution. Of an estimated population of 185 million, just 26 million were digitally included in 2003. However, from 2000 to 2003, the access to computers grew about 50 per cent. According to IBGE (2004), in 2003, 15 per cent of Brazilian homes had computers and 11 per cent had access to the Internet.

Even though computer technology is still behind in Brazil, mobile phones' diffusion continues growing and has opened gateways to access regions that had not benefited from the implementation of a fixed telephone system, such as the countryside areas. Thus, the alternative of just having mobile phones is more utilised by poorer families and in 2003, 5.5 million homes which had only mobile phones also had an income under ten minimum wages (minimum wage was BRL 240 = €63.24) (IBGE, 2004).

During the 1990s, mobile phones started to be adopted in Brazil, first, because it was a novelty and second, because of the lack of supply in the fixed telephone system, especially for home lines. In 2004, 34 per cent of the population had a mobile phone, and the number of subscribers to Personal Mobile Services reached more than 61 million in 2004. Based on these numbers, Brazil was in the 6th position in the world. One can assert that mobiles became a democratising factor (see Sorj, 2003), especially among low-income populations and those working in the grey-labour market sector (Pedrozo, 2004). However, youth power is visible in the mobile phone market. One of the companies with the largest market share pointed out that 20 per cent of its clients are below 25 years of age, and among new customers from this age group, the percentage goes up to 40 per cent (De Chiara, 2004).

THE EMPIRICAL STUDY: DATA AND METHODS

The empirical part of this study is based on survey data on Finnish and Brazilian young people aged 16–20 years. It is important to note that this kind of survey, comparing a developed country such as Finland and a developing country such as Brazil, and trying to investigate new definitions of identity, digital media and consumption styles among young people is quite new. There are studies about young people's attitudes towards ICT (for example, Grant and Waite, 2003; Zhang, 2005). There are also a few comparative studies on attitudes towards ICT (for example, Li and Kirkup, 2005), but there are very few studies which combine ICT and consumption styles (see, however, Wilska, 2003; Autio and Wilska, 2005). Comparative studies that combine attitudes towards ICT and consumption at an international level are almost non-existent.

The data used in this study are originally derived from the survey 'Consumer Cultures of Young People in the Information Society',[1] which was first carried out in Finnish schools in 2001. The aim of the survey was to look at issues of new technology, consumption and environmental aspects and to search for interdependence between those issues. The target group of the survey was young people, 16–20 years old in upper secondary schools, vocational schools, and other middle-level educational institutes throughout Finland. Upper secondary schools included both ordinary schools and those that were specialised in science, technology, and environmental studies. Other educational institutions in our sample included middle-level business schools, schools of technology, schools of social services and vocational schools. The schools were located in cities, small towns, and the countryside, in both wealthy and deprived areas. The questionnaires were completed during school lessons, under supervision. The total sample size was 637 students.

The same survey was performed in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2003 covering both wealthy and deprived areas of the city, and one area in the countryside. The sample size was 736 high school and undergraduate students, from both private (mostly middle and upper-middle class schools) and public federal schools (low–middle but mainly middle class schools) including some technical schools. An additional sample was included in 2004 and comprised 251 students from public state schools (lowest socio-economic categories). The complete sample size was 987 respondents, and some changes were required in the questionnaire besides the translation into Portuguese, to adapt to local reality.

The results showed some distortions, for instance, in relation to the respondents' social background. This was caused by the heterogeneity of the Brazilian sample — the extremes in terms of income, poor and rich students. Moreover, the poorest half of young people in the age group under examination are already out of the educational system (see De Castro, 2006: 181).Youngsters who came from better financial and educational backgrounds have many opportunities to succeed in their future careers; on the other hand, those who came from the lowest strata have less or no chances of entering universities or getting reasonable jobs (see also Wildermuth and Dalsgaard, 2006: 16). Students from state public schools demonstrated low instructive level, limited vocabulary and little understanding of what they normally read. Most of those schools were located close to risky areas such as slums and at times classes were just cancelled. This fact contributes for the data collection to be a very difficult and unsafe task in Rio de Janeiro.

The survey questionnaire consisted of 56 questions divided in three main sections. The themes of the first section were the respondents' socio-economic background, general economic well-being, use of money and self-perceived consumption styles. The second section included the use of mobile phone and attitudes towards information technology. The third part investigated attitudes towards environmental and ethical issues in relation to consumer choices. The

respondents were also asked about the possession and use of different goods and services, as well as about how they predicted their futures as consumers.

In this article, we first look into the general structure of young people's consumption patterns and their self-perceptions as consumers in both Finland and Brazil. Then we scrutinise their use of information and communication technology and finally we focus on the connection between ICT use and attitudes towards information technology and the information society, perceived consumption style, gender, and other possibly significant background variables. We use cross-tabulations, Factor Analysis and MANOVA (Multivariate Analysis of Variance) as methods.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONSUMER IDENTITIES IN FINLAND AND BRAZIL

Most young people in the Finnish sample regarded their economic position as good. A majority of them (57 per cent) were able to put some money aside and 46 per cent saved with a purpose. However, 16 per cent of the respondents were never able to save anything. Daily expenditure included clothes, mobile communication, alcohol, travelling, sweets and soft drinks, hobbies and other leisure-time activities, such as sports. For most, parents contributed to leisure-time expenditures. Items such as clothing or beauty care were supported less often than leisure-time related items such as the use of mobile phone.

The respondents were also asked to evaluate themselves as consumers, on a five-point Likert scale, with respect to frugality, trend-consciousness, impulsiveness, individualism, and environmental consciousness. As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of the respondents placed themselves in the middle categories for most consumption styles. The meanings of the values for self-perception on the 1 to 5 Likert scale (1 = spender, 5 = thrifty) indicate that the respondents were likely to regard themselves as prudent, thrifty, and environmentally conscious consumers slightly more often than they were to regard themselves as squanderers, impulse shoppers, or free-riders. The means of individualism and trend-consciousness also indicate that respondents more often regard themselves as trend-conscious and individualistic than as laggards and mass consumers. To follow fashion and trends, and yet to regard oneself as an individualistically-oriented consumer, reflects the (post)modern consumer's classical conflict: There are requirements for individualism on the one hand and peer group pressure on the other (see, for example, Gronow, 1997; Van Gorp, 2005). This applies in particular to young people who are right in the middle of the process of constructing their consumer identities.

It is not surprising that so many of the respondents regarded themselves as slightly more frugal and environmentally conscious than the average. In general, Finnish people tend to see themselves as less materialistic than 'the others.' (Wilska, 2002b: 199). Despite material welfare, the 'ideal' consumer in Finland

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Table 1 Self-perceived consumption styles in Finland (percentages)

	Mean	1	2	3	4	5	
Spender	3.18	10	22	22	33	13	Thrifty
Trend-conscious	2.83	5	31	44	5	5	'Laggard'
Impulse shopper	3.13	9	23	26	31	11	Prudent consumer
Mass consumer	3.50	2	11	37	35	15	Individualist
Environmentally conscious	2.72	4	37	43	13	3	'Free rider'

is still someone who aims at saving money and spending frugally, unlike in many other Western industrial countries (Autio and Heinonen, 2004). However, ICT use is generally regarded as 'legitimate' consumption in Finland. Thus, people 'dare' to admit that they spend more money on ICT than they believe other people do (Wilska, 2002b: 199–200).

In the Brazilian survey, around 60 per cent of the youngsters regarded their families' financial situation as moderate. Most of the respondents asserted to be able to save some money and half of the sample saved with a purpose. In addition to basic expenses such as house, food, and education, highest private expenses included leisure and entertainment, clothes, snacks and extra-educational courses, all of them provided by parents. Mobile phones were considered a high expense for only 16 per cent, since the majority of the sample adopt the pre-paid card.

As can be seen in Table 2, Brazilian respondents' self-perceptions for their consumption styles were below the average for impulsive buying, slightly above the average for individualism and trend-consciousness, and clearly above average for thriftiness and environmental consciousness. The respondents regarded themselves as thrifty even more than was the case in Finland. However, the evaluation mentioned earlier was based on a subjective interpretation of how one views himself as a consumer. Many Brazilian respondents considered themselves thrifty and conservative consumers since in Brazil the reality for lower classes is harsh, and the purchasing power has gone down even for middle classes. On the other hand, the relatively high trend-consciousness and individualism in perceived consumption styles indicate that consumption is important to many young people also in Brazil. For Brazilian young people, trend-consciousness, particularly for clothes, is also a way of manifesting a higher class position. Particularly less

Table 2 Self-perceived consumption styles in Brazil (percentages)

	Mean	1	2	3	4	5	
Spender	4.04	6	7	16	20	51	Thrifty
Trend-conscious	3.00	14	19	38	13	16	Laggard
Impulse shopper	3.72	7	10	24	24	36	Prudent Consumer
Mass consumer	3.22	8	14	45	16	17	Individualist
Environmentally conscious	2.00	44	24	23	5	4	'Free Rider'

privileged young people imagine that when they try to look rich and imitate middle-class lifestyle they could become more equal and not to be looked down by middle-class youth (De Castro, 2006: 185).

Self-perceptions about consumption are also relative in terms of general levels of consumption and income. Brazil is characterised for being an extremely unfair and unequal country, with a huge number of impoverished people (Barros et al., 2001). In 1999, 14.5 per cent of the Brazilian population lived with an income below indigence line, and 34 per cent with an income below poverty line. However, if one compares Brazil's income per capita with other countries, it can not be considered a poor country. Rather the problem in Brazil is unequal distribution of existing resources (see Rocha, 2003). Thus, as higher material welfare is a privilege of the elite the pressure to belong to consumer society is a heavy demand, especially for young people from the lowest social classes.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S USE OF ICT IN FINLAND AND BRAZIL

In Finland, a great majority (91 per cent) of the respondents in this survey had a mobile phone at their disposal. An average, young, Finnish phone user made and received from six to eight phone calls per day and exchanged the same number of text messages. The attitudes of parents towards purchasing mobile phones for their offspring are generally positive, and phones are commonly bought to children as young as seven years old. One should note that for the youngest children, the phone is usually intended as a 'lifeline', even if children themselves see it mainly as a fancy toy (for example, Suoranta and Lehtimäki, 2003). For teenagers, a mobile phone is regarded as an everyday necessity.

As well as mobile phones, computers and the Internet were also inseparable parts of everyday life for the young people in our sample. All respondents used the Internet at least occasionally. Almost half of the respondents were connected to the Net daily. Half of the young people had an Internet connection at home; the rest used the Net at school. Entertainment sites attracted young people the most (66 per cent of the respondents), although the search for information was the most important purpose for Net use in general. The Net also had a social function: a third of the respondents had made friends via the Internet. This suggests that young people in general are accomplished users of the Net.

In the Brazilian sample, 74 per cent of all students owned a mobile phone. The great majority (69 per cent) preferred the pre-paid card which is a call control per se. The respondents usually made and received six to eight calls and sent and received around two text messages per day. It is interesting to note that the number of calls and text messages students made and received was equally high among richer and poorer young people. One possible explanation for the fact is the lack of alternatives for the poor; that is, a fixed telephone line at home. Moreover, according to a commercial survey, parents from various social classes frequently buy the latest mobile phone models and other ICT equipment to children as young as seven years old (De Chiara, 2004), just like in Finland.

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Despite the socio-economic digital divide, most respondents in this study had access to both 'old' and 'new' media. Ninety-eight per cent of the respondents had TV sets and 77 per cent had PCs. With regard to the Internet, 82 per cent were digitally included. Sixty-seven per cent had an Internet connection at home and 15 per cent had access elsewhere. Among the respondents, 46 per cent used the Internet every day. The most used services on the Internet were e-mail, chat, information, and entertainment. About half of the respondents had made friends on the Net.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN FINLAND AND BRAZIL

Young people's attitudes towards the use of new technology were measured with a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). The attitudes were then analysed by factor analysis. The goals of factor analysis are the summarisation of correlations among variables and the reduction of a large set of variables into a smaller number of factors. The set of factors are extracted from the correlation matrix and rotated to increase interpretability. Factor analysis is commonly used particularly in lifestyle and consumption style studies (see, for example, Johansson and Miegel, 1992; Katz-Gerro and Shavit, 1998; Wilska, 2002b, 2003). In this analysis, principal component extraction was used to maximize the extracted variance and Varimax-rotation to minimize the complexity of factors (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001: 610, 615).

In the Finnish sample, a five-factor solution turned out to be the best. The explanatory power was 54 per cent of the total variance (see Table 3). The first factor reflected enthusiasm in technology, high skills and the desire for a career within ICT. ICT was seen as a preferred way of both earning and spending. The factor was called *Skilled User*. In the second factor, there were high loadings for arguments, according to which ICT was maybe useful, but not interesting and own ICT skills were low. The whole topic was boring, and in general, the pace of the information society was too fast. The factor was named *ICT Opposer*. The third attitude dimension, *Suspicious*, saw the whole information society as a threat that increased inequality, destroyed the environment and ruled our lives too much. In the fourth factor, *Practical,* the attitude towards ICT was positive, unreserved, and pragmatic. The role of ICT was seen as easing both everyday life and social life, but there was no real enthusiasm in either the devices or the technology itself. Conversely, for the fifth factor, *Gadget Enthusiast*, the most important thing in new technology was the possession of the latest technical innovations, at any price, whilst their use was secondary.

In the Brazilian sample, a three-factor solution turned out to be the best, explaining much more of the variance than the remaining components, and best characterizing the relations among the set of variables. Thus, the further investigation as well as interpretation looked more coherent. The explanatory power in the Brazilian sample was 39.5 per cent of the total variance (see Table 4).

Table 3 Attitudes towards the ICT and information society in Finland, by factor analysis

	Factor 1 Skilled User	Factor 2 ICT Opposer	Factor 3 Suspicious	Factor 4 Practical	Factor 5 Gadget Enthusiast	h^2
I dream of getting rich from the ICT business	0.841					0.716
I would like to have a job within the ICT business	0.790					0.718
I'm very enthusiastic about most new technical innovations	0.682					0.599
It's important for me to own the latest technical innovations	0.580				0.464	0.611
I am a very skilled user of ICT	0.548	−0.500				0.610
I'll use ICT a lot in the future	0.418			0.401	0.309	0.496
I use ICT a lot in my social life	0.378					0.272
I'm afraid I'll drop out of the rapid development of ICT		0.694				0.571
ICT is unavoidable nowadays, but it's not interesting.		0.678				0.498
I don't understand anything about ICT		0.674				0.630
I'm against the ICT		0.506	0.484			0.581
I am sick and tired of all the fuss about ICT	−0.390	0.481	0.322			0.563
ICT devices are too expensive		0.334			−0.695	0.631
ICT rules our lives too much			0.712			0.591
ICT increases environmental problems			0.641			0.507
ICT increases inequality			0.651			0.446
The importance of ICT will increase for work and leisure				0.769		0.625
ICT makes life a lot easier				0.570		0.520
People will socialise more and more via Net in the future				0.541		0.403
ICT may produce solutions for environmental problems				0.377		0.261
I'll get a digital TV as soon as possible					0.641	0.582
Eigenvalue	5.790	1.958	1.435	1.185	1.064	
Explained (%)	16.425	12.812	9.859	8.043	7.294	Σ54.4

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.878,
Barlet Test of Sphericity = 3809.382 Sig= 0.000

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Table 4 Attitudes towards ICT and information society in Brazil, by factor analysis

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | |
| | | | | |
	Skilled	ICT Opposer	Suspicious	h²
I dream of getting rich from the ICT business	0.721			0.521
It is important for me to own the latest technical innovations	0.684			0.487
I will get a digital TV as soon as possible	0.665			0.466
I would like to get a job with the ICT business	0.633			0.408
I will use ICT a lot in the future	0.605			0.436
ICT makes our life easier	0.469			0.365
I use ICT very much in my social life	0.378	−0.325		0.258
I am a very skilled user of ICT	0.354	−0.353		0.268
I am sick and tired of all the fuss about ICT		0.741		0.573
I am afraid I'll drop out of the rapid development of ICT		0.689		0.499
I am against ICT		0.679		0.461
I don't understand anything about ICT		0.646		0.427
ICT is unavoidable, but is not interesting		0.517		0.294
I am very enthusiastic about tech inovation	0.429	−0.450		0.400
ICT may produce solutions for environmental problems				0.083
ICT increases environmental problems			0.680	0.468
ICT increases inequality			0.653	0.441
ICT rules our lives too much			0.632	0.402
ICT and digital devices are too expensive			0.488	0.257
Eigenvalue	2.943	2.889	1.683	
Explained (%)	15.488	15.204	8.860	Σ39.5

Notes: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.808 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = 3272.2 Sig = 0.000.
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.
[a] Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

The first factor, called *Skilled User,* pointed to an individual with ICT skills, pro-technology, enthusiastic about ICT innovations, and tending to pursue a career in that area. In the second factor, *ICT Opposer,* there were high loadings characteristic of a person who is definitely against technology, and does not understand or use ICT. Actually, he gets annoyed with so much interest surrounding the subject. The third attitude dimension, *Suspicious*, showed the information society as excessively controlling people's lives, increasing inequalities and environmental problems and being inaccessible to everyone. In other words, the information society represents a threat. The factors were very similar to the corresponding factors (Skilled User, ICT Opposer, Suspicious) in the Finnish sample. This result is interesting, and indeed suggests that certain attitude dimensions towards new technology may be global, at least among young people.

An interesting question was whether the attitudes towards information technology were associated with self-perceived general consumption styles and with the respondents' socio-demographic background. In order to examine this question, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was carried out in both samples. MANOVA tests whether the mean group differences for two or more dependent variables are likely to have occurred by chance (Pallant, 2001: 219; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001: 322). The standardized factor scores that had been created by using and weighing in the variables with the highest loadings on each factor described earlier, were used as dependent variables.

CORRELATES OF ATTITUDES IN FINLAND

The results of the multivariate test for the independent variables (*F*-values of Wilks' lambda), as well as for each independent variable separately are described in Tables 5 and 6. For each independent variable, one group is a control group. All parameter estimates are expressed as a deviation from the mean value of this control group (Norušis, 1990: 90; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001: 51, 326). The parameter estimates (*B*) thus indicate how much the means of the different levels of the independent variables differ from the reference category (0). The *p*-value for *F* indicates whether these differences are statistically significant. The *R2* values indicate the explanatory power of the independent variables for each factor.

Among the Finnish respondents (Table 5), the self-assessed consumption styles had clear connections to the attitudes towards ICT, as did gender, too. Gender had the overwhelmingly highest explanatory power, which is indicated by the value of F in Table 5. In particular, the factor Skilled User was explained almost entirely by gender alone. The girls typically resisted and were afraid of ICT. Conversely, the boys were enthusiastic and accomplished users, who saw ICT as easing everyday life. The subjective perceptions of trend-consciousness, individualism, and environmental consciousness explained most factors.

Table 5 also shows that those with high loadings on the Skilled User-factor were also typically trend-conscious consumers. Conversely, the ICT Opposers

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Table 5 The correlates of attitudes towards ICT and information society in Finnish data

		Factor 1 Skilled User	Factor 2 ICT Opposer	Factor 3 Suspicious	Factor 4 Practical	Factor 5 Gadget Enthusiast
F		**12.101*****	**8.933*****	**7.556*****	**2.232*****	**8.416*****
Gender (F=37,63*****) (a)**		**B**	**B**	**B**	**B**	**B**
Girl	330	−0.92	0.80	0.66	−0.30	−0.65
Boy	274	0(b)	0(b)	0(b)	0(b)	0(b)
F		**163.04*****	**114.74*****	**75.92*****	**14.47*****	**75.74*****
Money at disposal (F= 2.47*****) (a)**						
1 Very much	11					1.28
2 Much	66					0.49
3 Moderately	338					0.42
4 Sparsely	147					0.37
5 Very sparsely	42					0(b)
F		**0.61**	**1.46**	**1.47**	**0.72**	**5.02*****
Trend-consciousness (F=1.81****) (a)**						
1 Trend-conscious	31	0.54	−0.11			0.65
2	188	0.35	−0.09			0.45
3	268	0.23	−0.08			0.49
4	86	−0.02	0.32			0.23
5 'Laggard'	31	0(b)	0(b)			0(b)
F		**3.31****	**3.55****	**0.73**	**0.19**	**3.27****

Individualism (F=1.96**)(a)

	N			
1 Mass consumer	11	-0.01	-0.19	0.48
2	66	0.13	-0.40	0.21
3	225	0.34	-0.33	0.42
4	214	-0.02	0.35	0.12
5 Individualist	88	0(b)	0(b)	0(b)
F		**2.72***	**2.51***	**3.96****
		0.81	**0.88**	**1.89**
100R²		**26.5**	**20.7**	**1.16**

Environmental consciousness (F=1.73*) (a)

	N			
1 Env. conscious	23	1.14		-0.15
2	227	0.69		-0.31
3	264	0.61		-0.20
4	76	0.42		-0.14
5 'Free rider'	14	0(a)		0(a)
F		**4.57***	**0.72**	**5.02****
100R²		**18.0**	**6.1**	**19.6**

Notes: a. F-value of Wilks' lambda, $p < 0.001$*** $p < 0.01$** $p < 0.05$*.
b. The value is zero because it is a reference category.

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with bad ICT skills regarded themselves as laggards also in terms of other consumption. This indicates a radical change in the cultural and social role of information technology. ICT has turned from a 'nerd' thing into something definitely 'cool' and trendy. The lack of technical competence, in turn, seems to be connected with lagging behind in all areas of consumer society. This may provoke other kinds of exclusion too, since nowadays digital networks mediate an increasing amount of information (see Wilska, 2001: 58). This danger of exclusion is probably not as obvious for the Suspicious-factor, because they can rely on their environmentalist ideologies that, in a way, are as up-to-date and 'cool' as new technology.

The Practical-factor, in turn, represented a large, grey mass, whose relationship with new technology was positive and free of hype. Coherently, also the consumption of those with high loadings on the factor was typically mass consumption. For those with high loadings on the Gadget Enthusiast-factor, the most important thing in the technology was the ownership of the gadgets as status symbols, rather than the accomplished use of them, unlike for the Skilled Users. Typical consumption of the Gadget Enthusiast-factor was 'hard', that is, trend-conscious consumption, and 'free-rider' attitude in environmental matters. The Gadget Enthusiast was also the only factor that was explained by the amount of money young people had at their disposal. Those with high loadings on the Gadget Enthusiast-factor typically thought they had a lot of money at their disposal.

ICT and gender — the digital divide in Finland

The notable difference between the attitudes of Finnish boys and girls was rather surprising, because many studies show also different results. According to studies of Statistics Finland, the differences in computer skills between genders are not significant among the under 30-year-olds in Finland (Nurmela, 2001; Nurmela et al., 2000). Many studies have found   that age and education are the most important determinants for explaining attitudes towards ICT (Teo, 2001; Zhang, 2005; Räsänen, 2006).

Among young people, gender as a determinant for the use of ICT has not attracted as much attention as has education, for instance, although several studies suggest that there is much more fear and suspicion towards new technology among girls and women than among boys and men. It is also possible that women and girls underestimate their computer skills in surveys, whereas boys and men are more self-confident with their skills. In many studies, women report their computer skills as clearly worse than men do. Women also use computers in less creative ways than men do (Li and Kirkup, 2005; Nurmela et al., 2000: 23–4; Oksman, 1999: 174). It looks as if the traditional division of labour between genders is lurking behind ostentatious equality. Women and girls are 'users only', who, instructed by men, use the equipment that have been installed by men. Although a woman uses the computer fluently, she is not expected to install it or update the settings of the software (see also Gill and Grint, 1995).

According to Cooper and Weaver (2003), *computer anxiety* (feelings of discomfort and stress when responding to computers) is much more common among girls than among boys. Cooper and Weaver argue that this is mainly due to the nature of most software aimed at school-aged children. The software does not communicate with girls. Most games and computer-assisted learning programs are designed for boys, containing flashing lights, noise, violence and action (Cooper and Weaver, 2003: 15–8). Another reason for young girls' computer anxiety may be that in the home, computers are not as accessible for girls as they are for boys. The computers that girls use are usually owned by their brothers, fathers, and boyfriends (Kangas, 2002: 151). According to our survey, 48 per cent of boys had a computer of their own, but only 18 per cent of girls. A personal Internet connection was held by 28 per cent of the boys but only 7 per cent of the girls. In another Finnish survey, Suoninen (2003) discovered almost the same results.

CORRELATES OF ATTITUDES IN BRAZIL

In the Brazilian sample, the three attitude dimensions identified by Factor Analysis (Skilled User, ICT Opposer and Suspicious) were correlated with four variables: Gender, Father's educational level, Trend-consciousness, and Thriftiness. Table 6 summarises those relationships.

Table 6 shows that there were connections between self-perceived consumption styles and the attitudes towards ICT similar to the Finnish data. Those with high loadings on the Skilled User factor perceived themselves typically as trend-conscious consumers whereas those with hostile and fearful attitudes towards ICT (ICT Opposer) perceived themselves as not so interested in consumption, either. As mentioned earlier, the digital divide may cause other divisions as well, such as consumption-based exclusion (see also De Castro, 2006). In a country with huge social and economic differences and a high poverty rate, the digital divide may even deepen when it is linked to new technology. Those with ICT Suspicious attitudes were also relatively thrifty consumers. However, there was no connection between suspicious attitudes towards ICT and environmentally friendly consumption style as was the case in Finland. Due to the great educational differences in Brazil, the level of general knowledge among poor youth is generally low, thus some respondents in Brazil may not have been familiar with what environmentally friendly consumption really means.

Gender was significant for all three components, particularly for the factors Skilled User and Suspicious. Boys were typically more skilled, opposed less and were less suspicious than girls in relation to ICT, as in Finland. However, gender differences were not as big in Brazil as in Finland. Particularly for the ICT Opposer-factor, gender difference was much smaller and less significant, which was a bit surprising, since Finland is usually regarded as one of the most egalitarian countries in the world. However, smaller gender difference in Brazil may be due to the fact that there are more serious causes for digital divide in Brazil, such as

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Table 6 The correlates of attitudes towards ICT and information society in Brazilian data

	F	Skilled B	ICT Opposer B	Suspicious B
Gender (a)	F=18.94***	**6.50*****	**6.22*****	**3.50*****
1 Boy	395	0.44	-0.15	-0.26
2 Girl	419	0(a)	0(a)	0(a)
F		**39.25*****	**4.53***	**12.94*****
Father's education (a)	F=5.97***			
0 No qualification	96		0.61	-0.29
1 Elementary	111		0.39	-0.31
2 High School/Technical	268		0.31	-0.19
3 University	339		0(b)	0(b)
F		**1.10**	**12.67*****	**3.97****
Thriftiness (a)	F=2.17*			
1 Spender	51	0.05		-0.29
2	55	0.28		-0.03
3	128	0.30		0.20
4	171	0.19		-0.06
5 Thrifty	423	0(b)		0(b)
F		**3.21***	**0.84**	**2.54***
Trendiness (a)	F=4.00***			
1 Trend conscious	115	0.12	-0.58	
2	158	-0.02	-0.33	
3	324	-0.23	-0.31	
4	104	-0.37	-0.29	
5 Laggard	127	0(b)	0(b)	
F		**5.23*****	**5.21*****	**1.61**
100R²		**8.9**	**8.5**	**5.0**

a. F-value of Wilks' lambda, $p < 0.001$ *** $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.05$ *.
b. The value is zero because it is a reference category

social and economic differences. Father's educational level was very significant for the ICT Opposer factor, and significant for the Suspicious, too.

There was a connection between father's low educational level and being an ICT Opposer. For the Suspicious, the father was more likely to have a university degree. This was probably owing to the fact that students from more educated families are more knowledgeable and thus more risk-conscious. In many countries, the academic elite are particularly critical towards new technology and visual media (Pantzar, 2000: 251). However, young people from well-educated families are over-represented in the Brazilian data since, as mentioned earlier, the proportion of 'good' schools is high in the sample and a considerable number of students come from middle and upper-middle classes. However, youngsters from middle-low and low classes were also represented in this sample. Even so, this imbalance may distort the results of the analysis to some extent.

Differences in education and income — the digital divide in Brazil

Our results about the significance of father's education are consistent with other surveys and reports on ICT and digital exclusion. As mentioned earlier, education is one of the most important determinants for digital inclusion and exclusion (for example, Räsänen, 2006). In Brazil, there is also a lot of evidence about education being the main correlate of income inequality in recent studies (for example, De Castro, 2006; Wildermuth and Dalsgaard, 2006), and digital inclusion depends heavily on income, respectively. In 2003, among households with an income above 20 minimum wages, 78 per cent had a computer and 71 per cent were connected to the Internet. In households with a monthly income under ten minimum wages these percentages were eight per cent and five per cent, respectively. As a result, computer penetration and access to the Internet in Brazil are still restricted to higher social classes (Mapa da exclusão digital, 2003).

The selective role of education is emphasised by the heterogeneity of educational systems in Brazil. The quality of education offered by public schools which predominate in the basic and middle level, is extremely dissimilar and the best schools are private, only accessible to middle- and high-income families. Moreover, a considerable proportion, 30 per cent, of young people are totally out of education already at the age of 15–17. Among the 10–14-year-olds, seven per cent are not at school any more, or have never been (De Castro, 2006: 181). These kids come typically from the poorest families, and their knowledge and world view are thus mainly created by television and other media rather than by formal education (Wildermuth and Dalsgaard, 2006: 14–6). Thus, the poor quality of public education is the primary source of social, economic and —as a multiplying effect — also digital exclusion. However, also regional differences matter to digital exclusion and inclusion: among the digitally included population, 97 per cent live in urban areas (Reis and Schwartzman 2003: 21–2). The fact that our survey data was mainly collected in urban Rio certainly had an effect on the relatively high percentage of digital inclusion among the young respondents.

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CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the connection between young people's attitudes towards ICT, their consumer identities and socio-demographic background variables in Finland and Brazil. In the information society, both ICT and consumer culture are increasingly essential parts of young people's identity-creation processes. However, all young people do not have equal access to ICT or to consumption. Social, cultural, economic and demographic factors cause and increase the digital divide.

In this study, we found that in Finland young people aged 16–20 were less thrifty and more impulsive and trend-conscious consumers than their Brazilian counterparts. Finnish young people were also more independent consumers and their economic situation was better. This is not surprising, since the general standard of living is much better in Finland than in Brazil. However, most young people in the sample in Brazil were from middle-class families, and yet their perceived consumer identities were thriftier than the consumer identities of young people in Finland. This may be due to the relative nature of self-perceptions of consumption and income.

In terms of the diffusion of ICT, Finland is far ahead of Brazil. Thus, a digital divide exists between those two countries. Inside Brazil, the digital divide is much wider than in Finland; there is a higher concentration of dispossessed individuals with less access to information; low-income backgrounds, poor quality education, parents with no qualifications, illiteracy and high unemployment rates. However, the enthusiasm in new technology has been growing rapidly in Brazil over the past years, particularly for mobile phones, but also for computers and Internet connections. Mobile phone in particular, is an extraordinary example of the several dimensions to be considered when analysing the social impact of a product or service consumed in contemporary society (Sorj, 2003).

Among young people, gender was something that seemed to cause the widest digital divide in Finland. Girls were less interested in ICT, and also more suspicious and unskilled than boys. Consumer identities were clearly connected to attitudes towards ICT. This is interesting, since trend-consciousness, which was connected to ICT skills and gadget enthusiasm here, was more typical of boys than girls, contrary to general assumptions. Moreover, in most Anglo-American and European countries there has been a strong rise in the markets for specifically male products, particularly trendy clothes, cosmetics, and lifestyle magazines with the simultaneous advertising targeting men (Edwards, 2000: 135). Thus, it seems that as the new 'cool' consumption styles include both 'masculine' technology and 'feminine' trend-consciousness. The same relationship appeared also in Brazil. There, fathers' education was also an important factor that caused digital divide. It was interesting that the role of gender seemed to be smaller in Brazil than in Finland.

There are, of course, weaknesses in this kind of comparative study. A study based on a survey questionnaire can not go deeply into cultural differences.

Therefore, we cannot really know how the respondents have understood the attitudinal questions related to consumer culture or digital technology. The common understanding of the concept 'consumption' and the role of consumer culture in people's lives are always different in different cultures. In this particular study, the deep social and economic inequality in Brazil makes the comparison with Finland even more difficult. Even the data collection process in poor urban areas in Brazil was difficult and unsafe. Thus, the ultimate meanings of consumption and technology are probably different for young people in different countries. On the other hand, different socio-economic backgrounds also have a great impact on the role of consumption and consumer culture for young people.

In Brazil, students coming from low socio-economic background showed difficulty in understanding most of the questions, because their intellectual level is far behind the students with middle-class background. On the other hand, young people from low income backgrounds are willing to be part of consumer society much more than they actually are, and this is clearly observable in their desire to own as many material goods as possible and to follow latest trends and styles. For the poor young people in Brazil, 'right' styles are important for the sake of visibility in particular, such as for clothes, in order to raise a person's social status (De Castro, 2006). Poor young people in Brazil live in a society of have and have nots, which imposes high demands to belong. At the same time, impoverished young people are quite different from their wealthy peers by having more realistic needs, such as to work and help parents with the costs of living, or to save to buy a house for the family (De Castro, 2006; Pedrozo, 2004).

However, what was interesting in our results was that the data in the two different countries generated similar results in several aspects of consumption, particularly when related to ICT. It is notable that despite the different socio-cultural environments, similar kinds of attitudes towards ICT were found. Interesting was also that in both countries, consumption styles correlated with attitudes towards ICT. According to Sorj (2003), although the world is more and more interdependent, and information and knowledge instantly transmitted, the whole takes place in contexts of considerable diversity in terms of practices, history and cultures. Young people in this context also have their own strategies to guarantee their participation in consumer society.

The results of this study are also consistent with arguments about the global nature of consumerism and ICT. The results indicate that young people show similar behaviour when related to consumption, no matter where they live and in what conditions, although their motives for consumption may be different. Thus, for instance, young people in both Rio and Finland manifest similar kinds of consumer identities with the aid of ICT. However, the mechanism behind the identity-construction process differs. Although the motives to consume and to use ICT may be universal, socio-economic conditions undoubtedly affect young people's participation in the consumer society, particularly in countries of unequal income division, such as Brazil. Thus, identity-creation via consumption, however important it may be for young people, is far from that free 'play and art'

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postmodern theorists frequently describe. Instead, socio-cultural differences and economic restrictions must always be taken into account when talking about consumer identities of young people.

Moreover, we must not forget the role of 'old' media such as television in the formation of identity, lifestyles and worldview of poor young people, in particular. An interesting question is what will be the role of all media, ICT in particular, in young people's consumer cultures in the future? Can digital technology flatten out social and cultural differences and create new kinds of global consumer identities for young people in different parts of the world? Or is ICT just a new form of social division; something that is likely to increase differences between nations and individuals alike? There is evidence for both arguments in this study. Much depends on how equality in education and income-division progresses. Also changes in gender roles with regards to both consumption and ICT will probably cause interesting changes in young people's consumer cultures in the future, all over the world.

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ARTICLE 3: Pedrozo, S. (2011). To be 'cool' or not to be 'cool': Young people's insights on consumption and social issues in Rio de Janeiro. *Journal of Youth Studies,* Vol.14 (1), 109-123.

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To be 'cool' or not to be 'cool': young people's insights on consumption and social issues in Rio de Janeiro

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Given the importance of material goods consumption to young people and the perception that to be 'cool' is fundamental to identity construction, this study investigates consumption in relation to social, economic and cultural inequalities. Qualitative individual interviews took place in November 2005, in Rio de Janeiro, with 14 high school students, age range 16–18, from public and private schools, and diverse backgrounds. In the context of global changes, Brazil is pushed towards a more advanced economic development, though basic needs of most of its population are not met. Serious contrasts continually reinforce and reproduce social and economic inequalities, through prejudice and segregation based on race, gender, residence and origin. Poor youngsters face the challenges of living in a globalised but unequal society, such as inadequate education, transition from school to labour markets, unemployment and less social participation. The data suggested that consumption is important to provide the feeling of being 'cool', 'fitting in' and experiencing inclusion though inequalities are an obstacle to consumption. In divided societies, to consume or dream of consuming create illusions of belonging to different classes, and escaping from poverty; however, respondents argued that education is the most important factor for improving social and economic conditions.

Keywords: consumption; identity; youth culture; social class; exclusion

Introduction

A number of studies indicate that consumption plays a central role in young people's lives and in the construction of identities (Willis 1990, Miles *et al.* 1998, Gabriel and Lang 1999, Croghan *et al.* 2006). But despite the large number of options available to young people nowadays in many aspects of their lives, they are still subject to limitations and influences of all kinds (Furlong and Cartmel 2006). In Brazil, serious contrasts continually reproduce and reinforce social and economic inequalities through prejudice and segregation, based on ethnicity, gender, geographic location, origin and age (Welti 2002, Gacitúa-Marió 2005), and young people's opportunities are strongly affected by the complex correlation between these factors (Furlong and Kelly 2005).

As labour became more fragmented (Munck 2004), major changes took place in young people's transition from school to labour markets (France 2007); life became a 'biographical trajectory' or 'project' (Pais 1993, p. 196, Beck and Beck-Gernshein 2002 cited France 2007, p. 61), intrinsically related to the value youngsters invest in

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the present or future, and how they control their own careers and everyday lives. As Chisholm and du Bois-Reymond (1993, p. 260) point out, 'few things are certain and many choices are possible and . . . it is not clear which options will be possible and impossible and for whom'. The challenges of living in a divided society prevent youngsters from fully participating in consumer culture, and, although they are recognised as important producers of subjective identities (Giddens 1991), their life experiences are characterised by uncertainties. What is left to people, youngsters included, is to consume or to dream of consuming since it creates illusions of belonging to different classes, and escaping from social demands associated with the stigma of poverty (Van Bavel and Sell-Trujillo 2003).

Brazil: global inclusion and local exclusion

Global transformations have continually pushed Brazil towards a more advanced development comparable to developed countries, but it is a place of 'extremes and disparities, with income, technological and social advances unequally distributed' (Rizzini and Barker 2002, p. 133). Basic needs – housing, healthcare and education, and other public services of a great majority of the population also remain unattended. Gacitúa-Marió (2005, p. 144) discusses the mechanisms of social exclusion, which are triggered by two interrelated levels; the political–institutional level based on differences regarding access to resources and its control, and the socio-cultural level which reproduces inequalities and discriminations. Despite many gaps, Brazilian society has always demonstrated a strong consumerist trend, centred on hedonism (Sorj 2000) thus, indicating a great empathy with consumption ideology (Bocock 2001); in this case, the ideology of the elite (Ianni 1987). Processes of social mobility and middle classes' expansion during the 1960s and early 1970s were already incorporated into a capitalist consumer culture; there were shared aspirations and idealised paradigms of how to belong to middle class, although most Brazilians were excluded from those processes (O'Dougherty 2002).

Even with a significant process of intergenerational and intragenerational upward mobility in Brazil during the twentieth century (Pastore and Zylberstajn 1996), most of its population climbed only a few steps in the strict social hierarchy and few groups ascended several steps. For blacks it has been especially challenging to break that framework (Munck 2004). The result was a social pyramid 'stretched' upward which explains the relationship of high mobility/high inequality. Almost 30 years after the publication of the study, the situation has not yet changed (Pastore and Zylberstajn 1996, p. 290). According to the National Household Sample Survey 2001 – PNAD (see Quadros 2003, IBGE 2007), the social pyramid is divided into four large layers; the two on the top encompass the elite/entrepreneurship and upper/ upper middle classes. The two other layers include the large urban working class (lower/lower middle classes), and the agricultural sector with extremely low wages. The latter represents the second axis of the Brazilian social problem; the same exclusion visible in slums (*favelas*) and peripheries in large urban centres is also seen in rural areas (Quadros 2003, pp. 18–23).

Among Latin American countries, Brazil displays the lowest social mobility particularly for youngsters (Andersen 2001), and the most unequal income distribution compared to other countries. Near a third of the population lived in poverty in 1980, and figures have not changed in the last 25 years (Luna and Klein

2006, p. 240). Thus, high income inequality and low social mobility lead to significant gaps between rich and poor, resulting in hardly any opportunity to overcome disparities (Andersen 2001). However, in the last few years a new class of consumers[1] has been growing and shows a huge potential to purchase and consume – R\$365 billion (€133.2 billion) in 2007 (O Estado de São Paulo 2008). This large middle class which corresponded to 44.19% of the population in April 2002, has reached 51.89% after 6 years with household income ranging from R\$1064.00 (€394.00) to R\$4591.00 (€1699.00) (Neri 2008, pp. 27–29).[2] Important factors such as employment growth, credit availability, price stability and social programmes contributed to the upward economic mobility of the poorest segments [C, D and E], and particularly for class C development. Material ambitions such as buying a car, a house or electronics are priorities for those consumers, though the difference lies in the way goods are purchased; it is always on credit provided by lending institutions, with high interest and long repayment schedules. Consumption on credit seems to be an individual way of reducing the gap between rich and poor (Van Bavel and Sell-Trujillo 2003).

However, consumption neither replaces nor is an option to social classes in Brazil. Education is a critical factor and really embodies 'the integrated nature of class and consumption', due to its critical position in reproducing social inequality; class is clearly related with higher education and this, in turn, is a determining factor to grant access to higher level occupations (Marsh and Blackburn 1992, p. 184, Bradley 1996). In fact, the role of education in social stratification is undeniable; but its effect on class processes should be analysed in a large class structural context (Savage 2000). Several studies on social stratification and income distribution point to education as the key factor for social mobility, better jobs and wages (Marsh and Blackburn 1992, Barros and Lam 1996, Bradley 1996, Pastore and Zylberstajn 1996, Savage 2000, Quadros 2003, Reis and Schwartzman 2003, Gacitúa-Marió and Woolcock 2005, Luna and Klein 2006). As Bourdieu (1984, p. 23) argues:

> 'Academic capital is the guaranteed product of the combined effects of cultural transmission by the family and cultural transmission by the school', being that 'the efficiency of the school depends on the amount of cultural capital directly inherited from the family'.

The above quotation supports the fact that family background is highly important in determining young people's education prospects (Burnhill *et al.* 1990 cited Furlong and Cartmel 1997, Andersen 2001, Gayle *et al.* 2002, Wilska and Pedrozo 2007). On the other hand, education provided for the poor in Brazil is characterised by heterogeneity, and contrasts are visible in geographical regions, educational systems, quality, material and human resources, thus accentuating the inclusion/exclusion mechanism (Schwartzman and Reis 2005). As Luna and Klein (2006, p. 191) argue 'disparities in literacy rate by race, ethnicity, region and gender remain impressive in Brazil and reflect class boundaries'. Improvements in education, especially on primary and secondary instruction are an important goal to be pursued (Barros and Lam 1996, Schwartzman 2005), since the challenges to succeed in entry exams for public universities (free of charge) are even harder for students from public schools.

Despite the introduction of a 'policy of quotas' (public universities) for ethnic groups and students from public schools in recent years, low rates of higher education participation are visible and, as Archer *et al.* (2007, p. 220) remark, 'barriers to HE participation among working-class groups, are located within a complex mix of personal, social, cultural, economic and institutional issues'. The digital divide is an accurate example of the existing dynamic since ICT challenges require, at least, a basic educational level. Lack of computer literacy, cultural and economic factors affect disadvantaged youngsters and may restrict even more their chances to participate in the increasingly demanding and globalised labour markets (Wilska and Pedrozo 2007).

Globalisation brought a heavy burden to societies from developing countries as well as for poor populations in developed nations 'under the sway of capitalist market relations' (Munck 2004, p. 25), and caused great changes in young people's experiences. Youngsters are primarily affected with unemployment and less participation in social and political processes, but also with lack of perspectives towards the future (Giddens 1991, Beck 1992, Furlong and Cartmel 1997, Wyn and White 1997, Camarano *et al.* 2004, Jeffrey and McDowell 2004, Gacitúa-Marió 2005). Their pathways are still critically shaped by inequalities, mainly class and gender, and influenced by social, economic and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1984, Furlong and Cartmel 1997, Jones 2002, Bell 2001 cited France 2007) thus, offering few realistic choices. Serious contrasts limit young people's life chances and educational projects, and continually reinforce and reproduce existing patterns of socio-economic and cultural differentiations.

Young people, consumption and identity construction

To address the issues it is important to highlight that contemporary consumer studies have stressed the role of consumption as a significant practice in the construction of individual identity (Uusitalo 1998), as a sphere where young people can be, or try to be themselves (Miles 2000), particularly as a way for youngsters to negotiate group affiliations and social status (Croghan *et al.* 2006). However, young people's identity construction processes are incorporated in their cultural specificities and local contexts and bring both opportunities and restrictions especially for low income youngsters, vis-à-vis their subjective change. Social inequalities in Brazil affect the way young people deal with subjective issues such as transition into adulthood and choices regarding work (De Castro 2006). Wyn and White (1997, pp. 117–118, 124) mention that identities are essentially social, as they are constructed through 'gendered and classed' social practices although individual in nature, and affected by institutional practices. The authors argue that many youngsters have no income and many others live in poverty, marginalised from institutions and from consumer markets. On the other hand, consumer markets promise a condition of 'power, identity and independence' but many youngsters live a situation of exclusion although they are confronted with a paradoxical situation of inclusion.

As Croghan *et al.* (2006, p. 474) have discussed, it is an 'exclusion that implicates the self-concept as well as material or physical well-being'. The 'polarisation' between those who can consume and those who cannot (Miles 2000, p. 123) has an effect on consumption of material goods, on access to information and communication technologies, culture and education. In large Brazilian urban centres, those

contradictions are mostly visible between lower and upper social classes (De Castro 2006). For many poor youngsters the endless pressures to consume and to belong to consumer society are experienced as a failure for not coping with a 'culture of competitive consumption', that would give them a chance to be valued (Archer *et al.* 2007, p. 228). At the same time, the ephemeral condition of goods and its constant renewal leads to reproduction of social differentiation; as Lipovetsky (2002, p. 171) argues, in the *logic of the sign-object* 'goods work as icons of mobility and social aspiration'.

In the culture of commodities, upper middle classes and upper classes engage in conspicuous consumption given their privileged social positions (Bourdieu 1984, Savage *et al.* 1992 cited Archer *et al.* 2007). But the impact is greater on poor young people's lives when they are excluded from consumption gratifications. The unfulfilled desire to be 'cool' may result in feelings of resentment and, eventually, in the involvement with illegal short-term gains to fulfil immediate desires (De Castro 2006, Archer *et al.* 2007). In Brazil's risk society youngsters experience 'being young' in different ways and shaped by different social inclusions, leading to different opportunities to access material and cultural goods (Minayo *et al.* 1999, p. 17). In this context, homogeneity does not characterise young people as a social group (Wyn and White 1997) but 'diversity' does, since different aspects are involved and discriminate youngsters; actually, 'youth is *socially divided* in terms of youngsters' interests, social roots, perspectives and objectives' (Pais 1993, p. 33).

In late modern capitalism, the impact of consumption brought a gradual decline in work values; as a result, people's sense of identity particularly youngsters became attached to 'patterns of consumption rather than work roles' (Bocock 2001, p. 109). In spite of this, consumer society 'remains socially divisive: inclusive and inviting of the affluent, mobile and able; exclusive of the poor, the isolated and the impaired' (Edwards 2000, p. 191). Nevertheless, developing countries are determined to participate in global consumer culture regardless of their critical social and economic inequalities; as Appadurai (1996, p. 83) remarks, the 'work' of consumption has become the 'central preoccupation of otherwise very different contemporary societies'.

Research questions and interview methods

Given the importance of material goods consumption to youngsters and the increasing perception that to be 'cool' is fundamental to identity formation, it was worth investigating consumption in relation to social, economic and cultural inequalities. In order to provide a sound and diversified understanding of the issues above, I chose schools located in affluent and deprived areas of the city and participants from different backgrounds. The main research questions conducting the study were: *What is the importance of consumption and to be 'cool', and can inequalities become an obstacle to consumption? How?*

In the current study, individual in-person interviews were conducted with 14 high school students, eight boys and six girls, age range of 16–18. Interviews took place in November 2005 and were performed in schools previously selected, lasting approximately from 45 to 90 minutes depending on respondents' level of interest and how articulate they were. Interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and translated into English. I used qualitative interviews to grasp the world and reveal experiences from the subjects' perspective (Kvale 1996), organised in a semi-structured

way to provide a multifaceted view of consumption. Interviews consisted of open-ended questions (probes/follow-up questions when needed) which stimulate in-depth information about interviewees' perceptions, experiences, feelings, beliefs and knowledge in their own words and provide comparison between their attitudes and impressions. Patton (2002, p. 374) says that 'an interview is an interaction' and involves some kind of 'conversation with a purpose' (Burgess 1984 as cited Mason 2003, p. 225).

Two types of interview were combined: a guide approach interview and a standardised open-ended format (Patton 2002, pp. 342–373). The guide approach consists of main issues to be covered and outlined in advance; it can be developed in more or less detail depending on the interviewer's ability to specify topics in advance, although issues not written in the guide but important to the respondent might come out during the interview, and would not be explored with other interviewees. It provides the interviewer with a flexible standard; topics do not have to be followed in any specific sequence, questions can be rephrased and the order can be altered.

The standardised open-ended interview consists of a number of questions formulated, listed and organised in such a way that the interviewer can ask the same questions and in the same order to each interviewee. Despite the structured format of this type of interview, questions are formulated in an open-ended format. Flexibility to use probes is more or less limited but depends on the interviewer's skills and the interview itself. The objective of this approach is to reduce variations in the questions asked to interviewees.

The advantage of using a combined strategy is to join the guide approach's flexibility with standardisation of the other approach, especially when the sample is culturally heterogeneous, as in the present study. I specified selected questions[3] as they had to be asked to interviewees, theoretically relevant to the research questions, and left other topics to be investigated if/when appropriate depending on the course of the interview. Probing was considerably more flexible.

I considered relevant the following description of the city where respondents live and study, as a reference to contextualise their discourses. In Rio de Janeiro there is a contradictory scenario; the geographical division between residential quarters [bairros] and slums [favelas] is not only a clear illustration of the existing inequalities but also, to borrow Wildermuth and Dalsgaard's (2006, p. 16) accurate expression, of 'an inert, almost impermeable social hierarchy'. In this context I begin my report on the environment of the interviewees: four of them attended a private school for upper and upper middle classes, located in an upscale area. Three participants lived in the area and the fourth one was enrolled in the same school thanks to a scholarship, but lived in a slum in a neighbouring quarter. Four informants studied in a federal public school[4] situated in a middle class quarter, and came from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and residential areas. Three respondents were students in a private school for low and low middle classes, located in downtown Rio, and lived close to school; the three remaining interviewees studied in a state public school for low income students, located in the 'subúrbio',[5] and lived within the area.

A typology (see Table 1 below) is a way to present the results in a qualitative research. In this study, the typology was developed from the framework I decided to follow and designed to describe interviewees' consumption attitudes based on the

Table 1. Typology constructed on the basis of interviews.[a]

Critical	Cool	Non-conformist	Resentful	Pragmatic
Boy 16 (A1)	Girl 17 (A2)	Girl 17 (D)	Girl 16 (C)	Girl 16 (C)
Boy 18 (B2)	Girl 17 (A1)	Boy 17 (C)	Boy 17 (D)	Boy 18 (B2)
Boy 17 (C)	Girl 17 (B1)			
Boy 17 (D)	Boy 17 (C)			

[a]Informants' socio-economic level is based on the Brazilian criterion (see note 1), and on parents' occupation and residence.

analysis of patterns found in the interview data (Patton 1980). Attitudes were classified in five categories: (1) critical; (2) 'cool'; (3) non-conformist; (4) resentful; and (5) pragmatic. Besides the typology, I also present interviewees' quotations.

As indicated in Table 1, more informants are in the first two categories – critical and 'cool'; the critical attitude regards consumption as central to people's lives, unrestrained and responsible for accentuating existing socio-economic inequalities. The 'cool' approach criticises consumption but, ironically, praises fashionable clothes and a proper style. The last three consumption attitudes – non-conformist, resentful and pragmatic – are typical of lower income respondents, in general; the non-conformist attitude looks for a change, it is a kind of resistance to the existing condition; the resentful one shows indignation about social inequalities and not fitting in; and the pragmatic attitude claims that money and consumption are not everything in life. Three critical respondents and just one pragmatic mentioned that being 'cool' was not so important after all though, contradictorily, they valued fashion and a suitable style in their own particular way. Similarities can be found in the comparative study by Wilska and Pedrozo (2007) between Finnish and Brazilian youngsters; it indicated that self-perceptions about consumption in Brazil are relevant regarding general levels of consumption and income. In fact, most youngsters considered themselves thrifty and prudent consumers given the reality for lower classes. On the other hand, high indices of trendiness and individualism suggested that consumption is important to young people.

Respondents' views

Bauman (1998, p. 24) argues that 'since it is money which in most cases *mediates* between desire and its satisfaction', it can lead to higher standards of living, providing well-being and consumption, but money means survival in the first place according to interviewees:

Money is important to everyone. (Boy, 16, Class A1, critical)

With money we can do anything...We have much more power, much more free-dom...mainly autonomy...doors open with money... (Boy, 18, Class B2, pragmatic)

If unimportant, it wouldn't be something that everyone would want to have more and more. (Boy, 17, Class D, critical)

Consumption and hedonism have singled out Brazilian middle classes from other classes as a result of their social mobility during the 1970s and advertising especially on television, had a significant role in defining their consumption aspirations. On the other hand, television has continually encouraged the poor to believe they can have the same consumption patterns as the wealthy (Sorj 2000). Even nowadays consumption associated to hedonism can be observed in the discourses of the middle and upper class youth, as some of the comments show:

> Consumption is becoming more important than anything . . . We cannot . . . live in a European society . . . and have this quality of life we have . . . everybody wants Dolce Gabbana, Calvin Klein, and at the same time there is the crowd that cannot pay for a trivial meal at the street vendor. (Boy, 16, Class A1, critical)

> Who creates consumption is the media . . . The media affect . . . people's decision, how to dress, to behave . . . In Brazil, you have inequality; a few have a lot, many have little . . . Those who can consume are in one class, those who cannot are in another one. . .Consumerism excludes. . . (Boy, 17, Class D, resentful)

The growth of Brazilian middle classes during the *economic miracle* era (1969–1973) created a paradigm of how to belong to middle class, built on collective hopes and desires, consumption goods and practices, which have been important to its identity formation (O'Dougherty 1998). For Bourdieu and Featherstone (1984, 1991 cited Lury 2001, p. 99), what differentiated the new middle classes from other classes was their 'novel approach to pleasure' and their 'pursuit of expressive and liberated lifestyles'. Lower income classes, however, have been excluded from the process of social mobility, although willing to participate in consumer society. As informants describe:

> The aim of all low income [people] is succeed in life . . . the person tries to match with the upper class . . . to be able to buy, to have money, to have all. (Boy, 18, Class B2, pragmatic)

> I bought a mobile . . . new release . . . I wanted to show to others that it wasn't the old one . . . it was a brand new one, fashionable, takes pictures . . . I think this is the way people like to be seen. . .they want to show what they are for what they have, and not for what they really are. (Girl, 16, Class C, resentful)

> A lot of people try to imitate others . . . If they buy, why can't I . . . just because they have more financial conditions than me . . . I can go there and buy in several instalments and it's like if I were them . . . the difference is that they pay cash and I pay in instalments . . . There are not many barriers imposed by life . . . people impose them to one another. (Boy, 17, Class C, non-conformist)

Consumption remains shaped by class and socio-economic inequalities in terms of what motivates people, how their consumer needs are expressed and the ways consumption practices really develop (Schor 2004). And it is important to reflect on how people take advantage of consumption practices to reproduce, raise or reinforce their social status in a symbolic way (Crompton 1996). One of the most visible forms of consumption and also a social class indicator is clothing, which plays a key role in the social construction of identities, 'keeping or subverting symbolic boundaries' (Crane 2000, p. 1). Clothes are the most important item of consumption for young people, particularly the poor, since having suitable and fashionable clothes or

accessories becomes essential for not being labelled 'poor' (Zaluar 1994). As remarked by some respondents:

> We like, sometimes, to be better than other people in some aspects . . . to have better clothes, more expensive . . . mainly girls . . . They want to buy branded clothing . . . don't want to buy . . . at Saara[6] . . . I will never buy [there] . . . (Girl, 16, Class C, resentful)

> I'm very consumerist . . . I love clothing, shoes, handbag . . . I don't live without computer and mobile phone . . . I bought a mobile with a camera . . . it's essential . . . imagine if I'm going to have a mobile without a camera . . . (Girl, 17, Class A2, 'cool')

> I have my CDs, my micro-system . . . my room has everything I want . . . TV, DVD . . . I'd like to have several Van Gogh's paintings . . . Can you imagine a house with no material good . . . it'd be madness . . . The poor will always be eager to consume what the rich do . . . some succeed, some others, not . . . (Boy, 17, Class C, 'cool')

> People only think about buying . . . To me, all is about buying . . . Sometimes I have a more important thing to buy like . . . a book . . . but then I prefer to buy clothes, a pair of shoes . . . I always try to [have] wear the latest fashion in clothing. (Girl, 17, Class D, non-conformist)

> Those rock bands' t-shirts are a differentiated stuff . . . There's the usual clothing and the latest fashion clothing . . . The bands' t-shirt is always that black thing . . . it's freedom, independence. (Boy, 18, Class B2, critical)

In recent times, a significant change has happened and has to do with an excess of material goods and leisure activities, producing new consumers, mainly the young – hedonistic and influenced by 'an economy of desire and dreams', not by 'an economy of needs' (Gronow 1997, p. 74), guided by emotions, not sensations (Campbell 1995). Modern hedonism holds that emotions are situated 'within' individuals as opposed to 'in' the world; pleasure is found in imagination and day-dream blend fantasy with reality thus, increasing pleasure. Consumption regards not the choice or use of products, but 'the imaginative pleasure-seeking to which the product image lends itself' (Campbell 1995, pp. 72, 89). As respondents explained:

> The importance of the material good is the affection you have for it . . . To me, the mobile phone is the most important of all . . . I'm very attached to my things. (Girl, 17, Class A1, 'cool')

> I'm not focused on money in the first place . . . even because . . . I want to be a monk . . . With money you have power . . . The material [good] has a lot of importance nowadays . . . I have books, I have clothes, I am . . . I am very consumerist . . . I have lots of images of saints . . . precious stones. (Boy, 17, Class C, 'cool')

Few can escape the appeal of consumption, 'certainly not the poor' no matter where they live – if 'in the First, the Second or the Third Worlds' as Gabriel and Lang (1999, p. 100) remark. Material goods therefore work as a way of expressing and indicating social differences (Dittmar 1992); for low income groups they communicate to others that the owner is not poor (Van Bavel and Sell-Trujillo 2003). Consumers deal with goods and their connotations in personal ways; using 'symbolic creativity' (Willis 1990); at times, 'subversively, as bricoleurs'; more exactly,

consumers 'appropriate and reappropriate goods' (Sassatelli 2007, p. 81), transform and recontextualise meanings (Willis 1990). According to participants:

> Not only clothing . . . I buy a lot, like small stuff that I transform . . . and decoration . . . such [as] . . . little mirrors with which I've changed all my furniture . . . I went gluing . . . painting . . . I end up buying these small things and changing my clothing . . . putting beads . . . sewing . . . (Girl, 17, Class A2, 'cool')

> This clothing thing influences a lot . . . I put on one of my mother's blouses [made] of Japanese silk . . . all embroidered . . . everybody looked at me and said what is this . . . but as I don't have the tiniest inhibition . . . I felt it great . . . then everybody came to say that it was very pretty . . . I think people don't have the courage to show who they are. (Girl, 17, Class B1 'cool')

> I'm influenced by fashion, it's important . . . But I try to differentiate [myself] . . . not using what I often see on the streets. (Boy, 17, Class C, non-conformist).

In modernity, young people face new risks, uncertainties and opportunities that will also bring uncertain results. The traditional family bonds as well as ties regarding work and school have weakened, and were replaced by more individualisation and less political links. Modernity as Giddens (1991, p. 6) claims, 'produces difference, exclusion and marginalisation'. Labour market reorganisation resulted in unemployment and underemployment among other changes, as the growing requirements for more educated people; along with social class, gender and race have a great influence on young people's life chances and on the reproduction of inequalities (Furlong and Cartmel 1997, Welti 2002, France 2007). Education is the alternative to overcome disparities, social exclusion and enhance opportunities for the youth in Brazil, in such a way that they can determine their own futures. As interviewees mentioned:

> I think a person only has [economic] condition if she has education . . . people will be able to live . . . not in an equalitarian society, but with opportunities . . . This is the fundamental support to minimise social inequalities, especially in Brazil. (Boy, 17, Class D, resentful)

> I see people wanting to grow, there are few people who think like . . . Ah, I was born poor, I want to be poor. (Girl, 17, Class D, non-conformist)

In countries like Brazil, the issue of youth 'agency' is far more complex particularly for the low income youngsters at risk, since they deal with significant degrees of vulnerability; 'the access to education, labour market, social services and political–institutional participation is closed' (Gacitúa-Marió 2005, p. 140). They hardly have access to goods, cultural public spaces and services; leisure activities are limited as well (Abramo and Branco 2005). As Wyn and White (1997, p. 143) remark, 'in the context of increasing economic polarisation and geographical concentration of the low income and unemployed populations, the lived experiences of young people are also those increasingly signalling the general collapse of community'. For large numbers of poor Brazilian youngsters, the right to consume and fit in may work in different ways as, for example, through music movements; shifting from a condition of disempowered single spectators to joint participants of consumer culture (De Castro 2006).

Concluding remarks

This paper has shown how young people's insights on consumption and social issues shed light on the overwhelming demands and pressures to consume, particularly on poor youngsters. The serious inequalities which characterise Brazilian hierarchical structure prevent them from participating in consumer society. To some degree they feel trapped within this 'double bind': the culture of competitive consumption can make them feel valued and it is in a way, required, since not belonging can lead to marginalisation (Archer *et al.* 2007, p. 228). In a paradoxical context, Brazil is continually pushed towards a more sophisticated development, but its extreme disparities as well as its advances are unequally distributed (Rizzini and Barker 2002). Contrasts continually reinforce and reproduce all kinds of inequalities, excluding and discriminating on the basis of race, gender, residence and origin (Welti 2002, Gacitúa-Marió 2005).

In this study a typology was used to classify interviewees' consumption attitudes in five categories – critical, cool, non-conformist, resentful and pragmatic. Although consumption is central to young people's identity creation, the processes of youth identification and belonging are deeply associated with class boundaries in Brazil. Young people's identity construction is incorporated in their cultural specificities and, in Brazil, the local context of inequalities affect the way youngsters deal with subjective matters. Fear of exclusion was verbalised in some discourses especially among low income interviewees. Discrimination is visible between upper and lower classes and even among members from lower classes; therefore, there is a need to emulate upper classes, as a matter of fitting in. As Brazilian society is highly consumerist as respondents mentioned, people attribute importance to being 'cool' and fashionable. Self-image, therefore, is highly valued and intrinsically associated with appearances and clothing which, in turn, are fundamental for communication and mutual identification. To engage in the creation of a fashionable style was implicit in almost all discourses, even in the critical ones. It was clear that resignation was not part of respondents' life goals; the ones from lower and middle classes expect to achieve more in the future and, despite the fact that Brazil is a class society, consumption is cultural in all classes.

Despite the large number of options, youngsters deal with nowadays in several aspects of their lives, many of them have no income and many others live in poverty, marginalised from institutions and from consumer markets (Wyn and White 1997, Furlong and Cartmel 2006). Labour market reorganisation resulted in unemployment, and underemployment among other changes; increased requirements for more educated people along with social issues have a great influence on young people's future and on the reproduction of inequalities (Furlong and Cartmel 1997, Welti 2002, France 2007).

Education is the key factor for social mobility, better jobs and wages, although education provided for the poor in Brazil is different in several aspects, accentuating the inclusion/exclusion mechanism (Schwartzman and Reis 2005). The data presented in this study are from the year 2005 and, actually, since the early 2000s consumer ICT technologies have advanced, but the digital divide is an accurate example of the existing dynamic; ICT challenges require, at least, a basic educational level. Lack of computer literacy, cultural and economic factors may affect disadvantaged youngsters and may restrict even more their chances in the

increasingly demanding and globalised labour markets. Unequal access to material or symbolic resources will significantly reduce young people's capacity to exercise agency and to construct identity, and will prevent them from performing a role in society.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. The new middle class is called 'emergent'; more money to spend but little education/culture.
2. Brazilian criterion of economic classification (CCEB) evaluates people/families' purchase potential, and does not classify the population in social classes. Market division is defined in economic classes (A1, A2, B1, B2, C, D, and E).
3. The investigation included additional issues on lifestyle, ownership of goods, environment and ICT. The list of questions is available by contacting the author.
4. There is a difference between federal and state public schools: both are free of charge, but federal schools require an entrance exam, have different curricula, and the educational level is as high as in best private schools. There is a mix in terms of students' socio-economic and cultural background, but, in general, they come from private schools.
5. 'Subúrbio' is a large and highly populated area normally associated with crime and low income people. Lack of infrastructure is visible as well as discrimination against the place.
6. Saara is defined as an open-air area for popular retail in downtown Rio, with many stores which sell inexpensive products of any kind, especially clothing and gadgets.

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IV

Running head: NEW MEDIA USE IN BRAZIL

NEW MEDIA USE IN BRAZIL: DIGITAL INCLUSION OR DIGITAL DIVIDE?

Abstract

The emergence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and, more recently, social network sites and online games brought profound changes to societies and people, particularly to young people. The new media changed communication, interaction, and leisure and provided a locus for identity development and group participation. Although the full impact of digital media on people and society is not yet known, there are already positive as well as negative concerns but new socialities and peer cultures may emerge. In Brazil, mobile phones became the main technology of connectivity, were rapidly adopted and reached all social classes as an example of democratic inclusion; however, the internet still lags behind as a result of socioeconomic, educational, and demographic inequalities that still prevail, cause the digital exclusion and place the Brazilian population at an unfavorable position. More public policies can convert the internet into a tool of citizenship so that the low-income people, especially the young, can benefit from it and become participants in the digital age. Future research should address these issues.

Keywords: mobile phone; internet; social network; inequality, digital divide; youth

The focus of this article is the emergence of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Brazil, stressing the adoption and popularity of mobile phones, the slower development of the internet and, more recently, the social network sites. Global transformations have continually pushed the country towards more advanced development, but its conditions are aggravated by extreme and prevailing contrasts - social, economic (income and wealth distribution) and educational which permeate the social fabric leading to digital exclusion and placing its population, the young in particular, at a disadvantage (Pedrozo, 2011). However, it is important to discuss the new media as a growing social and cultural phenomenon within the Brazilian context, and how it pervades people's daily lives, young people inclusive, despite the so many unfavorable circumstances, especially in regard to education.

Emergence of New Media

During the 1990s, the plurality of new media and digital cultures [material practices of appropriation] became the centre of the debates; new media were not "out there" anymore but, instead, "here and amongst us" (Boomen, Lammes & Lehmann, 2009, pp.8-9). As an extraordinary social phenomenon (Cooper, 2002) and above all a cultural one (Suoranta, 2003), new media are consumed in private and public spheres, integrated in modern societies, "crucially embedded in the structures and dynamics of contemporary consumer culture" (Silverstone & Hirsch, 1994, p.2) and in the regular production and reproduction of human social patterns (Lefebvre, 1971). Craig Watkins (2009, pp.160-161) argues that "we have evolved from a culture of instant gratification to one of constant gratification. In many ways, the social - and mobile - media lifestyle represents a new cultural ethos and a profound shift in how we consume media". On the other hand, new media neither conform to a standard nor radically change lifestyles; instead, it fit in with them (Lie & Sørensen, 1996). As Harper (2003, p.196) argues, "society makes the technology fits its needs".

Mobile phones and the internet have changed the notion of time and space (Neumayer, Raffl & Bichler, 2010), became key ways of communication, interaction and leisure; the former reshaped earlier forms of communication instead of replacing them (Ling & Horst, 2011) and the latter led to the emergence of different social networks (Näsi, Räsänen & Lehdonvirta, 2011) such as MySpace, YouTube, Facebook, online games and

others, and shaped societies with positive as well as negative outcomes - inequalities and educational gaps (Neumayer, Raffl & Bichler). New media have also changed the face of education but numerous disparities concerning [ICT] infrastructure, technology access, and computer literacy still prevail within and among countries (Ottestad & Quale, 2009). As Neumayer, Raffl and Bichler (p.46) remarked, contemporary societies are based on "many contradictions...for example, inclusion and exclusion". But, undoubtedly, digital media are changing the nature of people's social relationships and social network sites act as 'conduits' for connections and information (Baym, 2010). They are also "technologies of convergence" since they build upon personal and interpersonal potential for interaction which will lead to a merge of social practices and spaces (Papacharissi, 2011, pp. 304-310). Therefore, individual domains of sociality are not "restricted" but "reframed" and new forms of sociality may eventually develop - "mobile and flexible socialities" (Papacharissi, pp. 306-309).

The social impact of online networks on people, particularly on young people and on society, has been drawing the attention of specialists from different sectors of society; as Livingstone (2008) remarks, more optimistic views emphasize "new opportunities for community engagement, self-expression, sociabilities and new literacy skills", for example. On the other hand, more critical perspectives argue about lack of privacy and self-centeredness. There are also concerns regarding young people's production of creative material that will create a new local and global peer culture, but that will also oppose consumers' control by producers - as conventionally seen (pp. 394-395). Even if negative or positive outcomes are not yet known, social networking sites should be regarded as important social and cultural contexts which seem to provide young people and emerging adults with new places for friendship, communication, and leisure (Ito et al. 2009), for group participation and engagement in processes of identity construction ((Lehdonvirta & Räsänen, 2011; Manago, A.M., Graham, M.B., Greenfield, P.M., & Salimkhan, G., 2008), and for being in charge of one's individuality, lifestyle, and connectedness (Livingstone, 2008). The study of young people and MySpace conducted by Manago et al., for example, concluded that apparently young people's online world works as an elaborated continuum of their offline world; thus, performances and roles have endless opportunities in the online setting. There is, then, an interrelationship between online and offline worlds (Waechter, N., Subrahmanyam, K. Reich, S.M., & Espinoza, G. 2010).

The emergence of new patterns of socialization and identification break away from traditional links - family, communities, work, and allow today's youth to construct a reflexive project of the self (Bocock, 2001; Giddens, 1991). This is especially true when young people are the consumers of technology, as they enthusiastically adopt, shape and appropriate new media in their different forms (Castells et al., 2006; Horst & Wallis, 2011; Ito et al., 2009; Ling, 2004), and their lives are mediated by ICTs which add and change existing leisure and consumption alternatives and practices (Livingstone, 2003). As Paul Willis (2000) argued:

> Most of the ways in which we make meanings, most of our communications to
> other people, are not directly human and expressive, but interactions in one way
> or another worked through commodities and commodity relations: TV, radio,
> film, magazines, music, commercial dance, style, fashion, [and] commercial
> leisure venues. These are major realignments. (p. 48)

On the other hand, the way young people use technologies and the outcomes of their use depend upon social, economic and cultural frameworks; for example, parents' income and education are important factors when media-related goods are concerned, as they set limits on young people's patterns of use and socio-economic resources (Livingstone, 2003; Peter & Valkenburg, 2006) thus, contributing to several possibilities for social distinction or exclusion (Bourdieu, 1984; Murdock, Hartmann & Gray, 1992).

Despite possible restrictions that may occur, online social network sites have become a common destination for young people as well as young adults; in the USA from 2005 on, in the UK and across Europe in 2006 (Boyd, 2008; Livingstone, 2008), and in the rest of the world. In Brazil, Facebook is ahead of Orkut as the leading social network in the market with an increase of 192% in the past year, followed by Windows Live Profile and Twitter (comScore 2012)[1]. The way Brazilians appropriated these sites among others and, particularly Fotolog and Blogs, appears to have relation to users' needs for spaces of interaction and self-expression as well as for connecting and maintaining values on the internet (Recuero, 2008 a, 2008 b). As Horst (2011) argued "sociality has always been a key dimension of Brazil's engagement with the internet and new media" (p. 450).

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[1] ComScore (January 17, 2012).
http://www.comscore.com/Press_Events/Press_Releases/2012/1/Facebook_Blasts_into_Top_Position_in_Brazil ian_Social_Networking_Market

New Media and the Digital Divide

Political and public debates in the 1990s have focused their attention on whether new information and communication technologies would reduce the digital divide in terms of access and social inequalities. In fact, information and communication technologies' (ICTs) development, diffusion and adoption have fostered economic growth in countries around the world, although many countries remain uneven in all aspects and that unevenness becomes most evident particularly in current cities (Graham, 2002). Historically, any process of technical change has unequally benefited people in all places in a framework of social inequality, since sectors of society remained on the fringes of technological progress (Miles & Gershuny, 1987; Silveira, 2003). Actually, old [social] structures are reinforced (Suoranta, 2003).

A number of studies (Fortunati, 2006; Norris, 2001; Räsänen, 2006) have argued that the digital divide is an indication of serious and more critical divides - social, economic, educational, and developmental - and "adds a fundamental cleavage to existing sources of inequality in a complex interaction" (Castells 2001, p. 247), as seen in poor countries where deprivation, illiteracy and basic needs as food, healthcare, housing and well-being are unattended. These factors create barriers and account for differences in internet access and use in developing countries and within disadvantaged groups in developed countries (Neumayer, Raffl & Bichler, 2010; Newman, Biedrzycki & Baum, 2010; Van Dijk & Hacker, 2003).

The digital divide has been defined as the gap between have and have-nots, or the info-rich and info-poor in terms of access to new forms of information technologies (Castells, 2001; Haddon, 2004; Livingstone, 2003; Van Dijk, 2006; Wyatt, Henwood, Miller, & Senker, 2000); as the unequal access to new media based on race, level of income, social position, education, age, employment, gender and organization of household in different regions of the world; between and within countries (Castells, 2001; Chen, Boase, & Wellman, 2002; Lehdonvirta & Räsänen, 2011; Mossberger, 2003; Selwyn, 2004; Servon, 2002). Hargittai (2002) has pointed to the importance of skill as a 'second level digital divide'; the main issue is not just technology access but digital literacy (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008) - amount of use, familiarity with internet terminology and search mechanisms, evaluation of quality of information and social cooperation (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001; Van Dijk, 1999). Lack of computer literacy, cultural and economic factors

affect disadvantaged youth in a more radical way, and may restrict even more their chances to participate in the increasingly demanding and globalized labor markets (Wilska & Pedrozo, 2007).

It is also claimed that the digital divide is only binary (Warschauer, 2004) but, actually, there are several digital divides or a set of interconnected social, economic, political and technological issues besides physical and human resources and relationships (Gunkel, 2003; Van Dijk, 2005; Warschauer). This is an indication that technologies aggravate existing inequalities within socio-economic structures, promoting social differentiation (Lievrouw, 2001; Räsänen, 2006; Servon, 2002). The argument is considered technologically determinist and based on the notion that the use of technologies can bring certain applications and results (Bure, 2005). As a matter of fact, successful innovations are incorporated into society and soon start to change it; according to this view it is considered a technological revolution with significant social outcomes (Ling, 2004; Warschauer; Wyatt et al., 2000). To a certain extent people adopt technological innovations and assume they will function as predicted; technological determinism adapts to a significant number of people's experiences but with no room for one's choice and/or involvement (Henwood, Wyatt, Miller & Senker, 2000).

In a second perspective, technology is considered neutral and does not question its origins except the way people use technical devices, and make individual or group choices. As a neutral tool emphasizing choice, it opposes the former view for acknowledging its social outcomes. The fundamental nature of this perspective, inspired by Bourdieu's work, is the production of social and cultural meanings, which are attributed to technological devices through consumption or use. A third view, called constructivism, regards technologies as artifacts made by people, which shape political, economic and cultural practices. They are constituted by different social groups, whereas for technological determinism social change comes as a result of technological change (Henwood et al., p. 8-12). According to Light's vision (2001) "technology is not a neutral tool with universal effects, but rather a medium with consequences that are significantly shaped by the historical, social, and cultural context of its use" (p. 711).

Castells (2001) argued that the importance of the internet in social, economic, and political areas is equivalent to marginality for people without, with little access, or unable to use new media adequately (p. 247). The way the internet is being diffused in most countries, benefiting the most educated people to the detriment of less-educated ones contributes to

cause a deeper digital divide (p. 262). Although paths to bridge the digital exclusion are complex and depend on each country's social, political and economic contexts, the potential of media technologies should not be underrated as it is an important opening to informational, socio-economic, and cultural development (Chen et al., 2002); therefore, it is worth considering anything that might open possibilities (Thomas & Wyatt, 2000). Alternative steps for new media implementation should focus more on local necessities of each country, since the current vision sees digital inclusion as inserted within homogenized global information society and economy (Avgerou & Madon, p.8-10).

While the debate on the digital divide usually concentrates on the gap in internet access and use, for many people mobile phones have become one of the main technologies of connectivity (Fortunati & Manganelli, 2002). From luxury to "citizenship commodity" (Fortunati, 2002, p. 526), a shift from a technology of a privileged few to a fundamentally mainstream technology (Castells, Fernandez-Ardevol & Qiu, 2006), mobile phones confirmed the power of social inclusion and construction of citizenship. They became a tool of democratization capable of broadening access to communication (Fortunati, 2003). As Ling and Horst (2011) remark, "the mobile phone has quietly provided people at the bottom of the income pyramid access to electronically mediated communication; often for the first time."

The transformation of communication technologies in general, and mobiles phones in particular, has been considered one of the most conspicuous social changes to happen over the last decade, changing social relations and the self (Gergen, 2003; Sorj, 2003; Teather, 2000). In Italy as well as in India or Brazil, mobile phones were at first regarded as a luxury and adopted by upper classes, then widely spread across all social classes and, nowadays, millions of people use mobile phone technology (Fortunati, 2006; Hossain, Kathuria & Islam, 2010; Schwittay, 2011). In Brazil this phenomenon happened when prices declined and mobile phones became the medium of communication for low income people; in the African continent, mobile phones also spread extraordinarily fast; in 2000, one in 50 Africans had access to a mobile while in 2008 the ratio was one in three (De Bruijn, Nyamnjoh, & Brinkman, 2009, p.11). China, alone, has the largest world mobile population of 547 million (Guo & Wu, 2009, p.34) but in terms of world population 61.1% used mobile phones in 2009, mainly driven by its use in the BRIC economies - Brazil, Russia, India and China (Baym, 2010 p.19).

ICT in Brazil

Brazil is currently the fifth largest mobile phone market in the world but the largest in Latin America (Castells et al., 2006). Mobile phones were introduced in 1990 but the adoption rate rapidly increased after 1992, despite socioeconomic inequalities. The explanation for the fast diffusion was the lack of landline supply and long waiting lists, due to major deficit in investments and public sector inefficiency. In 1998, when the Brazilian telecommunications sector was privatized, mobile phones' diffusion hugely intensified and increased even more when providers introduced pre-paid cards. It proved to be an example of democratization in terms of inclusion, particularly empowering low-income people and those working in the informal labor sector[2] so they could communicate without time and/or place restrictions despite the high costs of pre-paid mobiles. Data from Agência Brasil (2011) points to a significant growth: the number of mobile phones (202.94 million) exceeds the number of inhabitants (190.3 million).

On the other hand the internet still lags behind as a result of socioeconomic, educational, and demographic inequalities that still prevail, cause the digital exclusion and place the Brazilian youth population, in particular, at an unfavorable position. It involves two major factors: the high costs of computers and connections and the lack of familiarity with technology. Usually, the highest rates of digital exclusion are found in low income classes, since there is a strong relationship between digital exclusion with other kinds of exclusion (Sorj, 2003). However, as Santos (2009, p.46) explained, a large number of people who earn between three and five minimum wages (respectively R$ 1245,00 = US$ 754.50 and R$ 2075,00 = US$ 1257.60) became internet users in 2008 as a result of computer price reductions, as well as funding provided by public policies. All these actions further contributed to a significant growth of internet access, as pioneering initiatives started back in the 1990s by the Center for Digital Inclusion[3] followed by federal government programs in the 2000s, as the project Computador para Todos (Computer for all)[4]. But despite numerous efforts and policies from individual municipalities, community-based organizations, non-profit organizations and private companies to reduce the digital exclusion, "access does not

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[2] Self-employed or employed without formal contract
[3] CDI is a global NGO based in Brazil. Retrieved from http://www.cdi.org.br/
[4] Computador para Todos is a federal government project in partnership with private sectors.
http://www.governoeletronico.gov.br/acoes-e-projetos/inclusao-digital/programa-computador-para-todos.

guarantee use" as Ono and Zavodny (2007, p. 1151) pointed out, since people who are nonusers might possibly stay behind any societal change. More investments in public policies of inclusion are demanded because although socioeconomic, educational and demographic inequalities are critical, the internet can be converted into a tool of citizenship so that the low-income people, especially the young, can benefit from it and become participants in the digital age.

The National Household Sample Survey (IBGE, 2009) showed that despite the increase of internet access in recent years, a critical digital divide still exists within the country; for example, in the southeastern region the access[5] to the internet was around 48.1% compared with 26.2% in 2005, while in the northeastern area was just about 30.2% compared with 11.9% in 2005. The sample[6] included 58.6 million homes; almost 35% (20.3 million people) had personal computers, 27.4% (16 million) had access to the internet, and 104.7 million people (10 years of age on) or 65.2% did not use the internet in the three months previous to the survey. There were three main reasons for not using the internet: For 32.8% of the people it was not necessary or they did not want; 31.6% did not know how to use it and 32.8% did not have a computer. The results have indicated that younger groups - 10-14 years old (58.8%), 15-17 years old (71.1%) and 18 or 19 years old (68.7%) accessed the internet more than other age groups, and users were more educated than those who did not access. In addition, it was also reported that women's internet access growth (22.9 %) surpassed men's (20 %)[7].

The survey has also pointed to household income, education and age as socio-demographic factors with the strongest effect on ICT ownership and use. As more educated people (74.5% and 15 + years of formal education) have internet access, this is only granted to 35.6% of the less educated ones (up to 10 years of education). Broadband access and use also increases with wage range as Olinto and Fragoso (2010/2011, p. 7) indicated. In rural areas, the main problems of the digital inclusion are the lack of network availability and the high costs of connections; thus increasing the use of LAN houses (similar to cybercafés) - a trend in Brazil cutting across all social classes, although its use is mainly associated to

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[5] Internet access is here defined as the proportion of people who were connected to the network at least once in the three months previous to the survey.
[6] http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/trabalhoerendimento/pnad2009/comentarios2009.pdf
[7] http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/trabalhoerendimento/pnad2009/pnad_sintese_2009.pdf

people's age - the young and the low-income (Santos, 2009, p. 45). As suggested by Wijers (2010), if young people's level of higher education (in this case any level of education exceeding primary school) were upgraded in a country, this could result in promising solutions to the digital divide.

Data analysis of the 2007 Latinobarómetro report pointed to age and education as key factors in the internet use in Brazil; race, labor, gender and income did not affect the chances to access in a regular way (Schlegel, 2009). According to Schlegel, internet access seems to have a strong correlation to social status, especially if access distribution is compared along with schooling (p.137-142). As the author discussed:

> The fact that schooling is such a strong factor may indicate that the fight against
>
> digital exclusion, in Brazil, must be [done] through educational inclusion,
>
> broadening the access to quality education. But a wider look at the results
>
> suggests that the predominance of what is called cultural capital, basically
>
> information and knowledge, is determinant of internet regular use. (p.154)

Digital inclusion is also strongly related to the transformation of schools - teachers' training, computers' educational use and its integration to the process of teaching and learning (Silveira, 2003). As Castells (2001, p. 259) notes, private schools are differentiated from public schools in terms of race, social class and technology resources; in Brazil, education provided for the poor is characterized by heterogeneity - contrasts are visible in geographical regions, educational systems, quality, material and human resources, thus accentuating the inclusion/exclusion mechanism (Schwartzman & Reis, 2005). Digital exclusion, in turn, also prevents the effectiveness of policies for the reduction of social exclusion, as activities related to government and economic spheres and a large amount of cultural production have shifted to the internet. The worsening of technological inequalities in information society as a result of historical, economic and political factors is, nevertheless, reinforced by people's exclusion from technological access and its development (Silveira, 2003, pp. 18-33). So, the information society should add a "pro-poor approach" in order to decrease the high levels of social exclusion and disparities, particularly in Latin America, known for its low levels of human and economic development (Barja & Gigler, 2007, p.15). As Silveira (2003, pp. 30-31) observed, digital inclusion in the information society is meant to ensure the right to interactive communication.

Concluding Remarks and Discussion

As Craig Watkins (2009, pp.160-161) remarked "we have evolved from a culture of instant gratification to one of constant gratification. In many ways, the social - and mobile - media lifestyle represents a new cultural ethos and a profound shift in how we consume media".

Digital media and online social networks became part of young people's daily lives and the locus of the reflexive project of the self (Giddens, 1991), new identities and lifestyles. Digital media brought new ways of communicating, interacting, new forms of leisure and self-expressing; its adoption and popularity gave rise to social networks, and people's social relationships have changed (Baym, 2010). The importance of social network sites lies on the fact that they are important contexts, social and cultural for "communication, friendship and play" (Ito et al., 2009, p.1), "socialization and identification experiences" for today's youth (Lehdonvirta & Räsänen, 2011, p.91), engagement in processes of identity development (Manago et al., 2008) and as a way of being in charge of one's individuality, lifestyle and social connections (Livingstone, 2008). However, as the outcomes of such a major social change are not known yet, there are concerns, both positive and negative, regarding the implications on people. New peer cultures may develop as ICTs mediate more and more young people's lives creating new consumption patterns and social interaction. New socialities may emerge - "mobile and flexible" (Papacharissi, 2011, pp. 306-309).

The emergence of ICTs brought economic growth and development for many countries, but brought the digital divide as well. In Brazil, there was a democratization effect with the adoption of mobile phones reaching all social classes but the internet still lags behind. No doubt there is a correlation between digital exclusion and other forms of inequalities - social, economic, educational, and demographic. Technology access is just the first step to digital inclusion but digital literacy is even more important and has to follow it; the full inclusion for all depend not only on public policies but mainly on quality education and teachers' training, to enable underprivileged youth to learn and use ICT resources and potential.

Although there is a growing academic interest in research on mobile phones and new media in general, there is a considerable lack of research on the social and cultural aspects of new media in Brazil; for example, mobile phones, the internet, social media, and its practices. Further studies, for instance, on the impact of new technologies on young people, particularly social networks, focusing on social and cultural aspects and their relation to existing

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structures should be conducted, since there is a huge gap in the current academic literature. There are many studies on youth violence in Brazil, but more research on the other dimensions of youth behavior is needed. Research is equally important to point out the ways low-income sectors of society appropriate new technologies, either by tracing the advances of the digital inclusion in Brazil and in the developing world as well, or by looking into the creative forms new media is introduced in those people's lives.

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