

Appropriations of Identities in daily lives of high school students from a private school from Novo Hamburgo city/RS

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Abstract

This research aims to understand the forms of appropriation of identities in the daily life of 29 high school students of a private school in Novo Hamburgo / RS. In this school, the study made its observations, field journal and interviews in the target groups at their 15 to 18-year olds. It is considered that the forms of appropriations in the daily life of youth occur through the need to belong, to fit in the contexts that are permeated and show the urgency to accept certain characterizations referring to a model, and this is redirected by the order of consumption and which is mediatized in their lives.

Keywords: Youths; Appropriations; Identities; Consumption; Media.

1. Introduction

The field of communications has important reflections on children's daily lives and produces endless narratives about their actions and behaviors. They have a legitimate role in relation to the identities of autonomous individuals in forms, in which young people can become attractive in the eyes of others - through consumption.

Specifically, for young people aged 15 to 18 involved in this research, the process of identity is the expression of what makes sense to their lives and guarantees entry to a place of belonging linked to some social group or particular style of life. For example, they seize the clothing of brands and accessories relevant to their social context, so that they feel permanently observed and evaluated in everything they do, or show they have done. They are appropriated from the most current cell phone as different brands stamped on their clothes.

Thus, they show that clothing is used in various ways as a means of communication and that it can bring new possibilities of insertion into other groups. According to Bauman (2005), the concept of identity was born from the crisis of belonging and of the commitment that it unleashed in order to bridge the gap between the "must" and the "is" and raise reality to the standards established by the idea – recreating the reality to the similarity of the question. According to this author there is an eagerness and constant attempts to find or create new groups with which they can experience belonging, that it can facilitate the construction of identity, softening the distance of this individual with a crowd of unknown people.

In other words, youths in conviviality are exposed to different looks and stereotypes about the scenarios that permeate them. They are inserted in a society destined to live in transience, characterized by postmodernity, either bound to their identities, their bodies, their relationships or their belongings. Thus, it

is necessary to understand how individuals live their daily lives: the vulnerabilities and potentialities contained in their living conditions and the plurality of cultural expressions that emerge from the experience of groups.

In this perspective, it is noted that the media has a significant role in relation to the appropriations of identities of this specific group for subsidizing ways in which these young people can mirror themselves to become attractive through other people's eyes. In the midst of these factors, the author Garcia (2009) points the school as a privileged place for young people to build their friendships and their groups.

Thus, this research chose a school as the place to observe these individuals allowing an approximation with the student diversity and had interviews in the focus groups corresponding to their sociocultural practice (Theater - GF1, Student Group - GF2 and Athletics - GF3), observations and field journal. The institution inserted is from the private network of Novo Hamburgo / RS. It can be observed the context in which these individuals are inserted and how these young people in their daily lives are characterized in the group, about who they are, what they do, what they like and what they use. Since, according to Pais (2003), "environment" is an important category in the study of juvenile identities, once they occur in physical places transformed by everyday practices into social spaces. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand the forms of appropriation of identities in the daily life of these 29 high school students of a private school in Novo Hamburgo / RS.

2. Media, Groups and Youth Daily Life

The media, which influences cultural terms, is so striking that its presence could not fail to be felt when it comes to appropriating identities. Even if one has a perspective of what place it occupies in our daily lives, the discussions about the interfaces between Youth and Media continue in consolidation. According to the author Setton (2009), there is a serious and narrow association between culture, globalization and consumption conveyed mainly by the media and leisure.

The culture of spectacle and visibility fascinates the young, providing an immense repertoire for the conception of the self and the construction of their identities, and it is from the moments of conviviality that they share specific symbols that express the belonging to a certain group. This symbolic web can have its woven yarns based on art, sport, science, politics, religion, etc. According to the author Silva (2013), it is in the group that the youths discover the comfort of sharing, of receptivity in relation to what they think, feel and covet.

In Brazil, academic studies on youth are developed only in the mid-1980s and they give visibility to the diversity of Brazilian young people's ways of living and showing the need to treat their plurality. In this conception, the youth category is understood as historical, economic, cultural and relational partner constructions, set up in a permanent process of change and resignification (PAIS, 2003). It can be said that young people live in post-modern times a time of deep changes and indelibly affect their daily lives in sociability.

Their relationships are challenged by social attributes that distinguish the young from each other, considering the different ways of living youth, (re) invented in daily life. For this reason, I will approach the elements that, in a certain way, "produce" ways of being young, of affirming oneself in society directly

linked to the stimuli of consumption and the gains and losses that occur in all their daily practices in their networks of relationships.

The exclusion of consumption makes it unsafe to belong in a youth culture, daily governed by uncertainties and constant changes. Their lives are woven by precariousness and reveal encounters and misunderstandings that reflect the macrostructural problems. In such a way, it reveals the perversity of a system that excludes, violent, negligence and leaves its young. Above all, regarding consumption, while there is a supposed democratization of access, we face the exclusion of a large part of the population as to the use and possession of these goods (BAUMAN, 1998).

Therefore, it is extremely important to have a look at the young as actors and not as a simple reproducer of what they live and experience, so they need to be understood from the world in which they are inserted in. Only by observing their ways of being, their conceptions of themselves and the contexts lived daily is that we can understand their feelings of belonging, how they construct their symbols and values, expressed in their ways of dressing, in their gestures and in all that somehow produces meanings of self.

Sarlo (2000) warns that all desires tend to resemble each other, but not all desires have the same conditions to be fulfilled. Ideology constitutes us as universal consumers, although millions are just imaginary consumers. In this logic, winners and losers are always created and this implies social consequences, since the market produces strategies to compensate some as well as punishments for those who are inefficient.

Since all social practices convey meanings, and these shape and influence what we do - our behaviors - all practices have a discursive aspect. Therefore, it is through the world of culture that the youths in their diversity have spaces of construction of shared identities. Next, I specify the methodological procedure selected for the investigation of the study.

3. Methodology

This research is defined as qualitative, having as reference the interpretative paradigm. Its analysis and interpretation of data was carried out through theoretical and reflexive source triangulation (FLICK, 2009), as well as the analytical category of Barbour (2009), reinforcing the differences between the intergroup (from one interest group to another) and intragroups (issues within the group).

The study included focus group interviews, observations and the field journal to analyze 29 individuals enrolled in the regular High School of a private school in Novo Hamburgo / RS. Each young student was included in one of the three (3) groups corresponding to her sociocultural practice (Theater - GF1, Student Guild - GF2 and Athletics - GF3).

As a methodological reference we used the authors Gaskell (2002), Barbour (2009) and Flick (2009), who talk about focus groups and methods of moderation and interaction. That is, it is understood the possibility of observing different or identical discourses between the intergroup, as well as within the intragroups, being able to show similarities or distanciations with respect to the other individuals.

In the following passage we will describe a synthesis of what they have transmitted and expounded on their individual and collective perceptions as presentation of the results.

4. Collective Marks of Youth Who Consume

The focus of the target group is that the conversation between them reinforces language as a resource in which we consent to express ourselves in our thoughts and desires, expressing current issues of their realities. By encouraging them to express who they believe they are, what they want to be or what they would like others to think they are, there is the incentive to reflect on their processes of building as individuals.

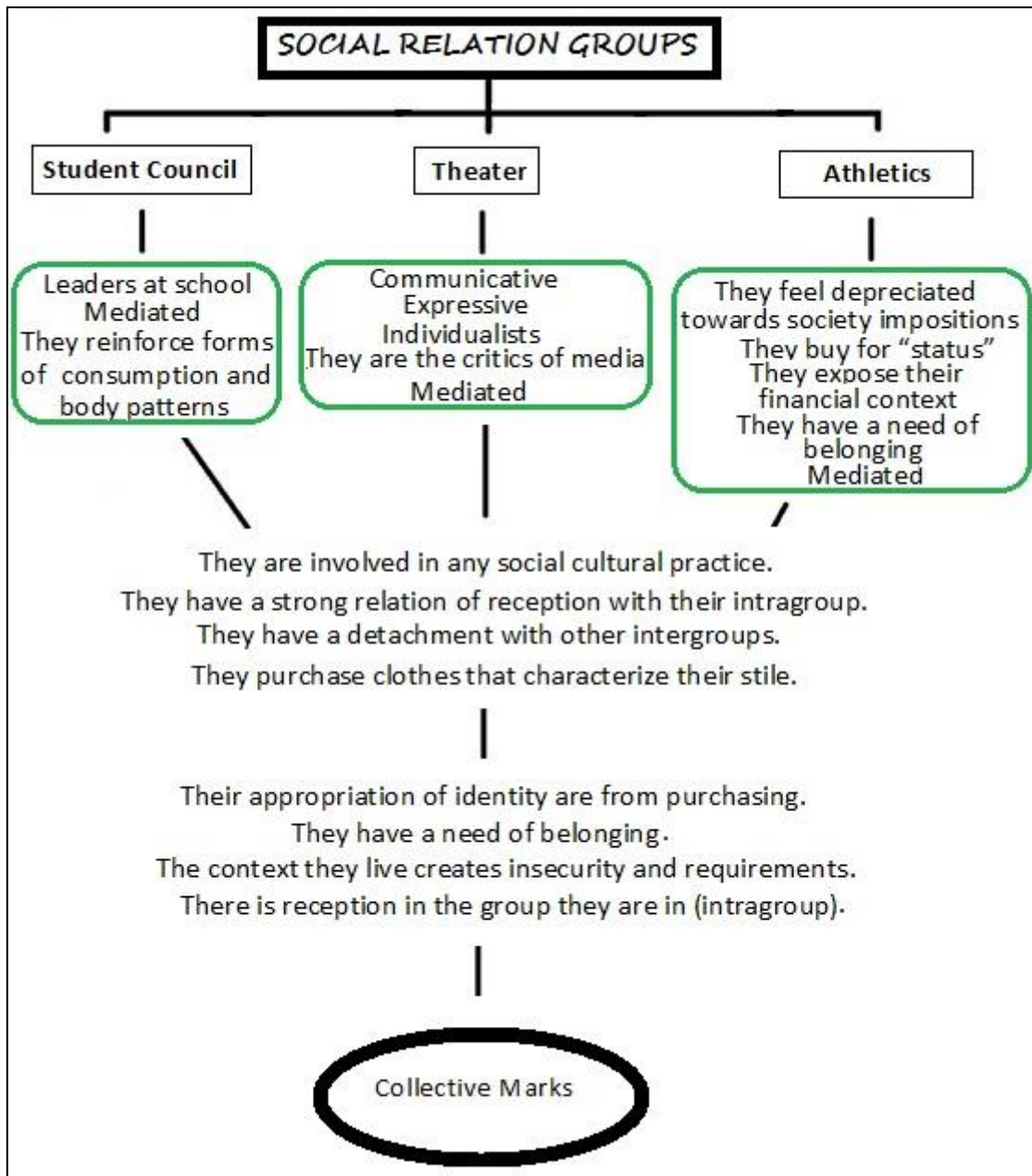
These young people are citizens between the ages of 15 and 17 who study in the first, second and third year of regular high school, who have just experienced a kind of 'rite of passage', which is entering this new cycle and is (re)constructing their identities and places of belonging. Thus, young denominations, individuals, focus groups, social groups, youths are all used to refer to this specific population, which was present at all times of the research and should be treated in the plural, as Dayrell (2005) puts it.

In addressing studies that cover the youth issue, it is deeply and committedly entangled in a complex web of social representations that are being built and modified over time and historical circumstances. That is, it is understood that young people are a representation through successive adjectives, which sometimes becomes a masked reality (PAIS, 2008). Within this perspective, the collective marks that sustain or distance these individuals in their relationships in social groups will be discussed in this category.

Based on their lines, four collective marks can be identified in the three focus groups about their ways of appropriating identities. The young people pointed out that they identify themselves through successive adjectives and that they consider the body as the first form of communication with the other. Above all, their appropriations occur from the relations between the subjectivity of symbols and the languages they develop in their daily lives.

That is, their appropriations of identity take place from the consumption (first mark) that occur due to the need of belonging (second mark) and the feeling of insecurity that permeates them (third mark). However, they also emphasize finding in their intragroups places of lower social pressure and there they can feel comfortable and secure (fourth mark). Also, it was necessary to elaborate a schematic synthesis of these groups, showing the aspects that differentiate each other and the approximations between them. Above all, to reinforce the collective marks identified in this research.

Figure 1 – Scheme of synthesis of the category



Source: Created by the author.

Based on these precepts, I will describe collective marks - not by classificatory order, because it is believed on their interconnectedness and their complexities - explaining and pointing out some of the speeches of these young students to understand this social picture. Their interrelations are situated in a constant cycle of new productions of discourses allowing circularity to the senses and produced meanings.

In the definition of these aspects and related to the reality of their daily life, the young people of this research are the reflection of an uncertain and provisional world, in which, belonging is conquered at each moment (MARQUES, 2003). These groups are constantly observed and evaluated in everything they do, or show they have done. In this sense, they expose the urgency of acquiring, through consumption, characteristics and values to be in a group.

To illustrate this feeling, the quotation from Guilherme, from the group of the Student Council

(GF2), mentions the need to mold themselves, exposing clothes, accessories and everything that defines them as part of the non-excluded, in order to feel safe somewhere. Then, they take ownership of what is imposed: "[...] imagine, buddy, I enjoy fanny packs. And that's when I came wearing a fanny pack. Everyone is going to fool you. You're going to feel bad. Depending on the person, man, he or she is going to cry. We do not use what we like, we use what is there "(GF2A9, 05/25/2016).

According to these questions it is observed that these young people do not want to have their identities allocated to stereotypes that exclude them from the ideal model of domination and power existing in their daily lives. Their narratives tell us that they are often judged by what they are not or what they do not have, generating a constant discomfort in their self-esteem. Now consumers, now commodities, they transit the networks of belonging, building relations of affection and power with their appropriations.

As it can be seen in the quotation from the young Athletic group Laís (GF3), who mentions how strange she feels about appropriating clothes she likes as an individual, but sometimes she is not exposed by the fear of inadequacy: " clothes that I like [...] are not so used, and I want to use it, but when I use it I feel insecure, [...] I'm very worried about what people are talking about, judging me and I did not want to, you know? "(GF3A8,17 / 06/2016).

These young people show in their appropriations what the author Marques (2013) poses regarding the game of representation of the identity to be sold and emphasizes that everything is inserted in the complex web of consumption: the image, the body, the style of dressing and behaving, the objects they own, and their preferences. In other words, their choices must be situated in the face of the struggle for survival characterized by constant pressures, as Bauman (2008) cites, whether by the media or society, so that "let us be one more person" (p.128) appropriating the updates, being connected to social networks, staying connected to the logic of consumption, doing college, etc.

That is, these youths behave as if their lives were an endless contest, in which the score can be reversed at any moment in favor or against them crossed by the variety of consumer scenarios. According to Pais (2008), young people "are what they are, but they are also (whatever they are) what is thought of them, the myths that are created about them" (p. 8) and which disguises and nominal masks they elect to be included. However, it is important to point out that all these fabrications seen in these young people come from the interconnectivity with the media and from their contact with it, which reshapes their lives.

In this conception, allusive to these positions, Pais (2007) develops a reflection on the questions that involve the idea of the increasing reflexivity, characteristic of postmodern society. It emphasizes that daily life is, par excellence, a place of reflexivity and it discusses the influence of social ties on our actions. This term implies concomitantly in different acts that modify our identity. The author reinforces that the affirmation of the self does not only mean a knowledge of itself, justifying that, however much one has an individuality, it is part of our legitimacy a recognition of self, by others.

This author also mentions that our society, rather than a "risk" society - is a dilemma society that reflects that the impasses of life and the choices we are made to take seem to favor affirmation of identity of self. In this sense, the problem of reflective identities revolves around not only the options to have, but, above all, the need to choose (PAIS, 2007).

From this finding it is realized that there is a real dilemma that manifests itself in a constant

movement of approaching and distance from the other, these needy and bondless youths connect, invent and reinvent ways of living their daily lives and ways of appropriating the which is relevant to them. According to Bauman (2008), these young people are being encouraged or forced to be and promote an attractive and desirable product that is to their liking. As the young Julia from the Theater group (GF1) points out, "the media are always creating a new one, putting them in advertisements or in social networks, paying people, [...] they pay people a lot to advertise about somewhere, some product and everyone wants to participate in it, everyone wants to be within this standard that was established. (GF1A3, 04/29/2016).

Consequently, in the daily life, these individuals seek the belonging from a guiding pattern, of any adornment that helps them to define and indicate the place that will welcome it. In view of this, youths experience multiple frameworks in relation to their appropriations of identity and idealize collective actions of insertion in society.

On the other hand, when searching for the place of belonging, the intragroup in this research proved to be a positive reference in their daily life, in which they can be themselves. As some individuals mention: "... we see that in order to have friends, we do not have to be the type they expect of us, we have to be what we are and find our group" (GF1A7, 04/29/2016); "[...] that is the hardest part, to deal with it [...] with other people [...]. And from there you have to remember, that somewhere they accept you as you are and there you belong "(GF2A5, 05.25.2016); "We enter knowing that we will not be judged, [...] everyone is adapting and, when you see it, you can be the richest person, and she will not care about showing off and of and showing what you have" (GF3A4,17 / 06/2016).

Therefore, "with whom they are", has a relevance to their identity traits. Alone they struggle at every moment for recognition and perceptibility, and they must advertise this way of life, so that they suppress this feeling of non-adequacy. However, when these young people mention the group they participate they connote another meaning for their world.

In the following passage, I bring three quotes from each focal group that shows in their narratives the security of belonging in something. "In here I think we get along very well, the group is very good, but the question that gets the most is outside" (GF1A7, 04/29/2016); "But so, there are groups that I feel more comfortable, like the Theater I use what I want, there are groups that I go the way I want, but there are groups that, I don't know, I go more straight, more fashionable "(GF2A6, 05.25.2016); "In this group I feel welcomed. And it does not matter if it's Nike, whether it's Adidas, if it's unbranded, we respect each other. And that happens, because everyone is there [...] to do their best and support the other "(GF3A7, 06/17/2016).

Consequently, one sees a break in the need to show what one possesses by being comfortable in one's own place. The connections that they make with their social group are as if the intragroup were the reference that in their daily life they have a space in which they can be themselves, without appropriating specific brands or, according to José Machado Pais (2008), of the nominal masks.

In this sense, I also emphasize the author Marques's (2013) speech that specifies the expectations of young people as to how they would like to be seen, the way they are seen and the way they believe they are seen are directly related to the cultural codes of the social group in which they are inserted. Therefore, referring to the first mark mentioned above, we identify a guideline of individual responses of each

intragroup, regarding behaviors and appropriations in their daily lives.

For the passage of these issues, I will point out more characteristics and discourses that form the intragroups, consequently having a wide picture of information that compares the intergroups. That is, I will detail the socio-cultural practice that the students practice in order to define the context in which these young people are inserted and project other possibilities of appropriations of identities and their insecurities.

The target group (GF1) represents the extracurricular activity known as theater, composed of 17 students, 11 of them (6 boys and 5 girls) participated in the research. It is a communicative and expressive group that highlighted different points to be discussed as: the forms that they appropriate in their daily life; different media platforms used in your daily life; the role of the individual in reinforcing the use of brands constantly in their bodies - call this process "human showcase" by displaying in their clothing specific symbols and, finally, criticizing the media for illusively selling a utopia, a world that is non-existent, claiming that it contributes to the disappointments of the current society.

In this way, this group (GF1) brought discussions that crossed several issues, but whatever the question, one could notice the reinforcement of individuality, the power of their choices and the ways of expressing themselves differently from the other. As Manuela mentions, in the midst of this discussion: "I think nowadays it's very easy for you to be just like everyone else, because we are in a generation that something becomes fashionable and everybody uses it" (GF1A6, 29/04/2016). However, during the interview, these same young students who spoke about this (pseudo) individualization of their choices of appropriation reconsidered their position in the face of reflection and concluded that there is, indeed, an influence.

The group that represents the Student Council of the school (GF2) elected through the creation of a slate and the voting that occurs in the school among all the students. It consists of 16 students, 13 of whom are in high school, and 9 (3 boys and 6 girls) participated in the study. In the interview most of the students highlighted different points to be discussed: the interaction of media and platforms in their daily lives; the forms of consumption to justify their interests of appropriation; the implications that brands have on their identities, the standardization of bodies and the need to consume something to feel someone.

Thus, it is noted in their speeches, including in the observations, the importance of the clothing characteristics and the fascination for globalized products, highlighting the countries of Europe and the United States. In addition, they report in their speeches the insecurity of appropriating something that is not accepted or positively highlighted in their context and constitute the question that erodes their wills and attitudes.

According to Bauman (2009), the context of liquid modernity in which we live, full of confused signals, subject to rapid and unpredictable changes, is fatal to our ability to feel comfortable and secure in the context in which we live. In this way, these young people project insecurities that they have in their daily lives in which they do not feel included or prepared for so many transitorities; which now require the capacity to be autonomous, disciplined and individualistic, almost as if they were the hope of a better world; now indicate the need to take advantage of the living and experiences that only occur in that period of age, as if the time more and more deprived of their lives.

From this context, this group shows how their daily lives have social pressure according to the

standardizations that are constantly disseminated through the media, they reflect on how they fit in and support some patterns, such as the Black Barbie collection, and despise others, like the advertising pieces that expose the supposedly ideal body and the way you follow these models. According to Pais (2003), it is from their appropriations that they establish social forms of conception and understanding that are articulated with specific ways of consciousness, thought, perception and action.

In contrast, the athletic group (GF3) also represents an extracurricular activity of the school and performs its training every day, joining diverse ages in the same time taught by a specific teacher of the area. This group is made up of 42 students, of which 15 are in High School and 9 (6 boys and 3 girls) participated in the interview about this research.

These students, even if they practice an individual sport, have an integration of stimulus, encouragement and support among themselves. They guide each other about their dedication and posture in the practice. It is a relaxed group that is related through anecdotes, but in their lines they show total comfort with the way of living. They constantly reinforce in the interview that they appropriate things so that they do not feel excluded from society, because this possession is a requirement of their daily lives and it makes them included.

In this group the young people's discussion was permeated by their dissatisfactions: now they revolved around the obligations and pressures of society, already mentioned above, and what it imposes on him; or reinforced consumer appropriation issues to feel good and fit. As Arthur quoted: "Society and the media itself right? The media is the worst influencer of the business, so people are what they are because they look at it somewhere. And, whatever, on TV, in the newspapers, etc." (GF3A3, 17/06/2016).

They presented individual stories about their financial conditions, reporting that they have a student scholarship through sport and did not always feel understood in school, only in their social group or at home. In the same way, they justify the difficulty in appropriating what is "fashionable" and how much it influences their belonging in a place.

According to Hall (2014), the processes of identity are the expression of what has meaning and value in the life of the individual and it will depend on an individual or collective subject. In view of this, it is noted that the youths experience multiple belongings in relation to different subjects, be they linked to the social group, to issues of gender, socioeconomic conditions, among others. These young people idealize collective actions of insertion in society, appropriations of identities and expressions that are their own.

There is a real dilemma that manifests itself in a constant movement of closeness and detachment from the other, this needy and bondless individual connects, inventing and reinventing ways of living his daily life and ways of appropriating what is relevant to him or her. In order to discuss the appropriations of identities of young people, we must also look for the micro differences among which so many others only perceive uniformity and conformity. Supposedly, each subjectivity, its values and its difference to the other is generated in each individual, although there are still similarities, there are multiplicities that emphasize the beauty of each individual, and that make the group so heterogeneous, although with a generalized look all look alike, conformed and standardized with the trend of consumption and belonging.

5. Conclusion

In view of the objective of this study, it is considered that the forms of appropriations in the daily life of youth occur due to the need for belonging, to fit in the contexts that are permeated and show the urgency to comply with certain characterizations referring to a model, and this is redirected by order of consumption and what is mediatized in their lives.

These young people in their social contexts only reinforce the construction of identities about the liquidity, the uncertainties and the fragility that exemplify the characteristics of the individual in postmodernity.

Regarding the intergroups, small characteristics are perceived that represent a distinction between them, but these signs are insignificant close to the similarities ascertained. Even though each group has exposed specific characteristics on the same subject, there was the identification of conformities among them, associated with the true values that drive their appropriation processes (the four collective marks mentioned previously in the three focus groups).

Finally, it is noted that sociability among young people has a wide field of discussion as to how their network of relationships is experienced by their groups and their respective changes, the gains and losses that occur in all their daily practices.

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