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Youth Digital Cultural Consumption and Education

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ABSTRACT

Media and technological devices function as socializing agents during children's leisure and entertainment time. Drawing from the theory of cultural consumption, a socio educational approach to students' digital practices, and media literacy, this qualitative study seeks to explore and describe students' cultural consumption profile. The authors explore the representations and meanings of digital practices of public school students of a predominately working class neighborhood situated in the periphery of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Findings highlight different aspects of youth cultural consumption profile. Two themes were identified: a) children use computers for a multiplicity of different activities enacting multitasking practices; and b) children develop new forms of digital practices for social digital interaction that are expressed in the "need" to be connected, the production and use of shared codes and the establishment of ambivalent relations with social media platforms. Implications for education are explored.

Key Words: cultural comsumption, digital literacies, youth identity, social media practices, technology education

INTRODUCTION

Previous research indicates that today teachers' struggle finding ways to connect with teenagers in schools (Pini & Panico, 2008). Teachers, especially those working in low-income communities, have serious difficulties designing teaching strategies that align with teenagers' interests and values that most teachers regard as void. Drawing from the theory of cultural consumption (García Canclini, 1999) and a socio educational approach to students' digital practices (Ceballos, 2010; Dussel & Quevedo, 2010; Kantor, 2009), the study seeks to explore and describe students' cultural consumption profile. In addition, from the perspective of media literacy , the study is grounded in the understanding that students' digital practices intersect with school-based literacy practices. According to Stone (2007), "this intersection is rarely addressed in literacy education beyond vague notions of drawing on students interests" (p. 61).

This article discusses findings obtained from a qualitative study conducted in a school located in a working class low-income neighborhood in the periphery of Buenos Aires, Argentina. In particular, this study expands on the students' cultural consumption profile delineated as a result of a quantitative survey study conducted in 2007 that identified students´ preferred activities outside school, particularly their preferences, habits and interests in terms of entertainment and social interaction (see Pini & Musanti, 2010, 2012). As a result of the survey study, we concluded that there is a "need to explore the differences regarding quality of appropriation and the uses of different groups of children of goods like cellular phones, computers, television and other technological devices. The discrepancy between those participants who are 'computerized and entertained' (García Canclini, 2004) is not due to inequity in access, because children manage to have access beyond their real economic possibilities to acquire the goods." (Pini & Musanti, 2010, p. 14-15)

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to deepen the understanding of students' representations of their digital practices by mapping teenagers' interests, what they value outside school, and the representations attached to those practices. Ultimately, the overall goal is making those representations and valued practices visible for teachers so they can be used as a resource for teaching and learning. We contend that mapping students' cultural consumption and representations of their digital practices, could be an important source for teachers to review and challenge the undervalued images of learners' interests and values. The understandings teachers construct from students' behavior have profound effects on the following aspects of teachers-learners classroom interactions: a) teachers' way of interacting and communicating with learners, b) teachers' perceptions of learners, c) institutional practices teachers implement, and d) type of learning experiences afforded to learners (Ninnes, 2004).

In what follows we discuss the theoretical framework grounding our study and we define critical terms such as "cultural consumption." Then we describe our findings identifying the types of digital practices that characterize students' cultural consumption profile. Specifically we focus on the students' multiplicity of technology uses and multitasking practices, and how they recreate forms of social interaction through diverse social media. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the identified practices, the implication of differences in access to technology, and the symbolic value these practices represent for school learning.

<div align="center">THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</div>

<div align="center">CULTURAL CONSUMPTION AND YOUTH IDENTITY</div>

García Canclini (1999) defined consumption as "the set of socio-cultural processes in which the appropriation and uses of products *are made*" (p. 34). This particular understanding situates the term "consumption" as part of a cycle of production and circulation of goods that makes visible other complex social and educational aspects that go beyond the economical ones. García Canclini (1999) explains that the relationship established between certain goods created to meet certain requirements does not involve a natural correspondence with people's needs. Needs, even the basic biological needs, are constructed and are always shaped by the sociocultural environment that surrounds us. This stance puts into question the instrumentalist conception of goods defined as commodities only produced to satisfy people's needs.

The concept of cultural consumption can be defined as a set of appropriation processes and use of products in which goods' symbolic value prevails over the use value and exchange value (Garcia Canclini, 2006). It is through the selection and use of cultural goods (i.e. cloths, movies, music), that youth contribute to assign meaning to the object of consumption. Interpretive scenarios such as the family, the school or the neighborhood mediate the consumption of cultural goods. These specific scenarios contextualize and determine the movements through which different cultural objects are assimilated, rejected, negotiated or adapted to new functions. "Each object

to be consumed is an open text, which requires the cooperation of the reader, the viewer, the user, to be completed and meant" (Garcia Canclini, 1999, p. 45).

We contend that it is important to investigate youth consumption practices because they function as mechanisms of integration and/or social exclusion. As a result, young people tend to get trapped in the present of the act of consumption, for instance prioritizing the immediate pleasure obtained through social networks. Cultural consumption constitutes an analytical tool to understand the various forms of appropriation of the mass media and communication technologies by different social groups. For instance, exploring cultural consumption shows how youth's identity construction is shaped through the consumption of products manufactured by industries. From this perspective, cultural consumption redefines youth identity positioning them as consumers or "consumer-citizens" rather than as citizens. Citizens have rights, essential to equal opportunities. Consumers can have what they can afford. Instead a "consumer citizen" is "a person who accepts any political situation as long as there is an abundance of consumer goods" (Spring, 2003, p. 5). This means that equality of opportunity is redefined as equality of opportunity to consume.

Currently, the market uses the mass media to exert an undeniable role in socializing children and young people. This trend generates a tension with different socialization agents such as school and family. The Anglo-Saxon literature is prolific in studies highlighting the influence of the market activity on the construction of children as consumers (Boyles, 2000; Buckingham, 2008; Giroux, 2000; Kenway & Bullen, 2001; Spring, 2003). Market activity impacts school life and the construction of citizenship through the growth of different forms of commercialization. For instance, the presence of fast food franchises in schools and the marketization of different digital devices as indispensable for learning. According to Minzi (2003) and Carli (2003, 2006) the old definition that positioned children in an asymetric relationship with adults, with less or no rights, less visibility and no voice, is being redefined by the new category of "consumer-child." This means that through the consumption of products and marketing, children and adolescents construct representations of the environment, the others and

themselves that lead to the construction of their identity. In relation to this, Balardini (2006) noted that working-class, low-income youth, and also their more affluent peers share two central features in the new configuration of their identity: their distancing from adults through technology and their preference for multimodal language. He explained that:

Technology is not distant from youth of the popular sectors, quite the contrary; it is very present in their life as invasive technology but poor in its possibilities, with a small component of interactivity... If the difference in terms of access to technology and its consumption is clear-cut among young people belonging to different social sectors, this circumstance does not challenge the fact that, in both cases, young people distance themselves from adults through their link with technology and through their capacity to process and use it. (Balardini, 2006, p. 13)

Rabello de Castro (2001) asserts that children and adolescents are addressed as "today's" consumers, not as "potential" consumers. This differentiation positions children as new social actors blurring the lines between childhood and adulthood. The author criticizes a consumerist ideology that reduces identity to individual appearance and material possessions. This ideology can be summarized in the expression: "to be is to have."

DIGITAL PRACTICES AND MEDIA LITERACY

This study is grounded in a socio educational approach to understanding students' digital practices in its context, where social and cultural differences introduce variations in uses and meanings (Ceballos, 2010; Dussel & Quevedo, 2010; Kantor, 2009; Kaplun, 2007; Pini & Musanti, 2010). From this perspective, there is a large gap between popular culture and school culture spread and deepened by mass media (see, 2000; Pérez Tornero, 2000; Morduchowicz, 2003). This distance may be, in part, due to school lack of knowledge about new forms of literacy practices that sprung from new technologies and the role of culture consumption in the construction of youth identity.

In Argentina, technology education tends to be reduced to the development of technical skills such as word processing, preparing presentations with power point, or mastering technologies that help to produce traditional school products. Although learning such skills is important they cannot stand-alone. More attention on critical literacies associated with multimodal production and cultural consumption will help teachers nurture children as critical thinkers and engage participants in democracies (Gainer, 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to explore how schools can prepare students to become critical thinkers and legitimate participants in democratic societies, and to identify the conceptual tools teachers can draw upon to lead technology education in that direction.

There has been a plethora of debates in the fields of media literacy and literacy studies in relation to what literacy means in the 21st century. These debates provide compelling elements for rethinking technology education. For instance, Santo (2011) distinguishes three frameworks or waves that illustrate the discussion of the relation between literacy and media in the last 60 years. He distinguishes a first wave of critical media literacy characterized by its association with both the explosion of the broadcast media in the 20th century (e.g. TV, radio, film, press) and the emergence of practices that empowered young people in relation to the messages of the mass-media landscape. With the emergence of the Internet, a second wave media literacy framework takes form mainly informed by the work of Gee (2004), Lankshear and Knobel (2007) and Jenkins, Clincton, Purushotma, Robinson and Weigel (2009) in their new media literacy. This framework emphasizes participatory media literacies and explains how people can participate culturally through new media, and become not only consumers of culture but also producers of it (Santo 2011, 2012). If the first wave of media literacy focuses on the criticality of the information spread by mass-media, the second wave encourages participation through media. Elaborating on these two prominent frameworks, Santo (2011) suggests a third wave that he calls "hacker literacies." Hacker literacies are defined as "empowered participatory practices that are grounded in critical mindsets and that aim to resist, reconfigure and/or reformulate the sociotechnical digital spaces and tools that mediate social, cultural and political participation" (Santo, 2011, p. 2). This third framework addresses technologies and media not only as a means for self-expression and participation but also as sociocultural tools. This perspective takes into account the materiality of the media and

its possibility to be reconfigured and tinkered in relation to personal values, ideologies, and individual agendas that sometimes can oppose those of the designer or dominant community. From such an understanding, empowered individuals have the capacity to critically question the intentions of creators of virtual spaces and change these spaces and tools when they are misaligned with their own values. Digital spaces such as *Facebook, Wikipedia, Youtube, Twitter, Second Life* and many others, can be seen as "malleable avenues for expression of the values and agendas of the individual user as opposed to solely those of the designer or dominant community (Santo, 2012, p. 199).

Scholars such as García Canclini (1999), and Martín Barbero (2002) have also argued the importance of rethinking the relation between youth and media. They claim children need opportunities to be part of a technological world they can critique, participate in, and also reconfigure according to their own values and personal stances. Thus, media literacy can be seen as a form of critical literacy that includes both, a productive and a creative dimension (Santo, 2012; Buckingham, 2008). Exploring how cultural consumption shapes youth identity and identifying the digital practices children develop inside and outside of the school is central for understanding how schools should change their approach of children's education and construction of citizenship (Cerratto-Pargman et al., 2014).

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative study was carried out in a big public school in an economically diverse neighborhood situated in the periphery of Buenos Aires city, with a high representation of working class and low-income families. The school houses all educational levels, from kindergarten to high school. In order to gather rich information on students' representations of cultural consumption as well as to expand on the findings derived from a survey study conducted in the same location (See Pini & Musanti, 2010 & 2012), we decided to implement focus group interviews with selected students (10 to 17 years old approximately). Focus groups provide valuable information or insights as the memories, ideas and experiences of individual members are stimulated when listening to others verbalize their experiences. As Gibbs (1997) explains, "If multiple understandings and meanings are revealed by participants, multiple explanations of their behaviour and attitudes will be more readily articulated." (p. 13). Data collection consisted of six focus groups with students, from 4th grade (elementary level) through the last year of high school (12th grade). School administrators and teachers collaborated in the organization of the groups. Participation was voluntary. As the school had two or more sections of the same grade distributed between the morning and afternoon school session , we established three criteria for selecting participants: a) students were distributed evenly by sex; b) students were communicative and did not have inhibitions to speak in a group; c) they represented the average level of achievement for the class. We requested at least 2 students per grade section, however four sections had only one student participating. Groups were organized by educational level. Represented grades were as follow: 4th to 7th grade (elementary level), 1st to 3rd grade (middle school), 4th to 5th grade (high school). We formed 6 focus groups of 7-8 children each with a total of 59 participants. The following table indicates the distribution of students by grade, focus group, and school section.

Educational Level	Grade	Focus Group #	# Students by group and school session
Elementary	4th-5th-6th	1	Morning 10
		2	Afternoon 10
Middle School	1st-2nd-3th	3	Morning 9
		4	Afternoon 8
High School	4th-5th	5	Morning 12
		6	Afternoon 10
Total			59

Table 1. Focus groups

Each focus group met for approximately 45 minutes. The conversation was taped recorded and later transcribed. The first and second authors facilitated each focus group discussion. Field notes were taken to supplement the recording and assist with the identification of turn taking in each group´s conversation.

We used a combination of theoretically based methodological tools drawing from ethnography and cultural studies to analyse and interpret meanings students construct about their practices. The analysis involved multiple readings by all researchers to identify patterns in the data. Initially, each researcher open coded all transcriptions. The researchers involved in the data collection discussed the open coding to identify common categories to use in a second round of analysis. Six categories were identified and a matrix was created for each category to sort through the data. The categories were: 1) Entertainment and technology preferences; 2) Different uses of computer and Internet; 3) Learning with technology; 4) Relationship between technology and school knowledge and learning, 5) Students knowledge and their perceptions of the value of this knowledge in the school; and 6) Emergent topics, for instance, the growing use of cell phones and social networks (this category was important because it included themes that students brought up during the focus group that we did not anticipate or expect). After reaching an agreement on the categories and their definitions, we recoded the data for each focus group and then, using the constant comparative method, identified patterns, and potential contradictions in the data. We analysed and interpreted children's responses focusing on the meanings they construct in relation to their cultural consumption and practices.

FINDINGS

Findings highlight different aspects of youth cultural consumption profile. Specifically, we identify two themes that characterize how youth expand old rutines and create new forms of communication: a) children use computers for a multiplicity of different activities at once enacting multitasking practices; and b) children develop new forms of digital practices for social digital interaction that are expressed in the "need" to be connected, the use of shared codes; and the establishment of ambivalent relations with social media platforms.

MULTIPLICITY OF TECHNOLOGY USES AND MULTITASKING PRACTICES

Scholars such as Morduchowicz (2008) and Urresti (2008) have discussed the centrality of youth social life and the prevalence of multitasking while socializing. While watching TV, they are chatting, making the homework and listening to music with a fluctuating and discontinuous attention. Computers are seen as a sort of swiss army knife with multiplicity of uses. Using computers or similar devices children can chat, listen to music, share photos, videos and music over Internet, play games, write e-mails, among other possibilities. Some of these activities are often practiced simultaneously as children engage with more than one task at the time and interact with more than one person at a time. Preferences such as socializing and multitasking are important elements to take into consideration in the design of teaching strategies able to motivate young people through innovative learning formats.

Despite the still prevalent disparities in digital consumption and access to hardware between social groups, data show that all students have access to computer programs and games. Several participants use the computer every day, others from time to time. We think the frequency of use has certainly to do with having a computer at home or having easy access to it; for instance some students use the computer in the cybercafe or at a friend's house. They have different forms of access to technologies and they use them because they choose to do so. It is the new way to belong to a group, and this is a growing trend.

Multitasking involves different activities, some for personal entertainment and some for social interaction. Many students mentioned that listening and downloading music are among their preferred things to do while using the computer. Repeatedly, data show references to students engaging simultaneously in different activities and indicating multitasking. For instance, listen to music, while chatting and surfing the Web and watching TV. When asked what do they do with the computer, a typical response was: "All. I chat and listen at the same time. Internet, MSN and Twitter" (Middle school, male) . A younger student (11 years old) described how he uses the computer: "I browse in the Internet and I like it ….I don't know, chat with friends, get in Facebook, play games in the Internet …" They could also be simultaneously searching for information, playing games or uploading photos. Responses show that students navigate Internet very frequenlty, but in very few cases the search for information is related to school tasks. Usu-

ally, searching is related to sports, shows, music, movies and games. When students look for information related to school content is because a teacher has requested a specific task that requires them to do so.

Students value the importance of the computer as a place to gather and store personal experiences, since it operates as album, journal, and bag of memories. These practices are illustrated in the following quotes:"... to store memories of something that you lived, you can leave it stored there, save it to a CD, you can save it to your computer and now you have all saved.... download videos..."(Middle school, female). Another student highlighted the advantages in this regard too: "You keep lots of information inside the computer…. I have lots of things on the computer, I have pictures of my family, I have notes... [things] which are important to me (Middle school, female). In that respect school activities related to classification, denomination and analysis of content could certainly build on students' prior experiences and skills to gather and store digital content. It is important that schools and teachers understand and integrate the multiplicity of tasks and skills students are able to perform, and that ultimately define who they are and how do they see their world.

NEW FORMS OF DIGITAL PRACTICES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION

Youth value new ways to establish and maintain relationships through diverse social media platforms and tools. In particular, they make emphasis on participatory practices that connect with their needs for membership and group identification. The data analyzed show social exchanges remain a driving force in the lives of the children we interviewed. They value relationships through various modes of communication and interaction. This confirms the need for group membership and identification, as well as the need for differentiation that enables them to feel unique and recognized. Digital devices play a central role in facilitating social interaction as they allow for rapid and constant social connection. For example, focus group data show that chatting cuts across all ages and is one of the main activities used to connect with others, in particular using MSN and social networks like Facebook. Our analysis show that children create new forms of digital practices for social digital interaction that expressed mainly in the "need" to

be connected, the use of shared codes as new literacy practices; and ambivalent relations with social media platforms.

"Need" to be connected. This "need" indicates an intertwined relationship between children's cultural consumption and their identity. Children talk about a "need" to consume technology in order to be able to be someone inside and outside of school as well as being someone in the analogic and the digital world. This need is permanently recreated and nourished by adverstising from companies selling products that offer increased speed and connectivity, more functions, less weight, and more faithfull artifacts.

Students explain that when there is only one computer at home, they need to take turns with brothers or other relatives. One student explains the difficulties of sharing at home: "What I see is that I am on the computer and I get up ….and someone already took it from me" (male, elementary school). Some of them have gathered more complex knowledge of how computers worked and were able to create passwords so others will not be able to log into their accounts. Students generate different strategies that grant access to the use of the shared devices and that assure the possibility to connect.

Playing games can also be a way of staying connected to a real or virtual other. Elementary and middle school students speak more often about video games. Often they play games online, and share strategies with others in the network to beat targets or to overcome games' obstacles. Several boys indicated they liked war games (eg.: "Counter strike"), network games, racing games (eg.: "Need for Speed"), and soccer games.

Middle and high school students indicate that their preferred social media is Facebook. Almost all students agree that this social network is of common use, both for boys and girls. They upload photos so 'friends' or contacts can look at them. Some students mention that even if they are not interested in joining social networks they open an account anyway. Some high school students explain they do that due to peer pressure or intervention, and interpret it as an inescapable situation. The following interaction illustrates this point:

F: They all say, "join Facebook"
M: Join Facebook, how is that you don't have it, it is good"…
F: "It is so much fun".

During the focus groups, participants across ages indicated that they spent quite some time chatting, either by MSN or Facebook, with friends, acquaintances, relatives or anyone connected. Some students often communicate with family members or friends who live far away, and some connect with people they meet via Internet. One student explains: "I chat most of the day; we are 5 brothers and sisters. The oldest go to school in the afternoon, and the youngest is almost all day with friends, I am the only one connected…"(Middle school, female).

Communication through social media, cellular phones, and other digital media is spreading and widening the possibilities to stay connected. Consequently, it is easier for private information to become public through social networks. The need of being connected is a phenomenon that is expanding into young people.

The use of shared codes as new literacy practices. As previously explained, chatting is a prevalent practice among students. Through chatting children develop literacy skills that they value. Chatting comprises emoticons, abbreviations and expresions that can be understood as signs having a known form (i.e. Spanish language) but with a new substance. This means that the meaning of the words or expression do not often correspond to the conventional meaning of words or expressions. In this sense, someone having Spanish as a mother tongue but not belonging to the particular students' social circle can have serious difficulties trying to understand the messages they are communicating.

According to Ferrari (2008), the language of the chat has the particularity to display characteristics of gestural, written and oral communication, a reason why chatting is considered a new form of communication and a new genre. When children are chatting they prioritize speed without losing understanding. For instance, the use of emoticons brings together the graphic form with pseudo gestures that expand gradually. Ferrari (2008)

does not agree with the idea that the language of young people is impoverishing due to the frequent use of the chat and sms. The author recognizes limitations of the language of youth, but he attributes them to other factors. The school curriculum is one of the factors contributing to the poorness of young people language given the lack of appropriate strategies that foster critical literacy. In this regards, Ferreiro (2013) affirms that children are not inventing abbreviations, since it is a very old practice. Mixing numbers and letters, using arithmetic operations signs, icons, replacing words for specific letters, are part of a code shared by the community they belong to, and not by adults. She affirms that young people write much more than before. However, teachers believe that students do not write the right way because they do not follow conventions. The author suggests that school digital literacy would benefit from integrating opportunities to reflect on the differences among communicative registers, and oral and written genres.

In line with what Urresti (2008) calls the new paradigm of "prosumers", students refer to several types of boys and girls' practices, such as commenting on what others write or upload, creating web pages, making and uploading family videos, TV shows or recording something fun they did with with friends. All these types of uses require specific digital knowledge and skills that needs to be acquired and transmitted to others in order for these practices to become shared and to foster social interaction. Some students claim they record and upload videos in Youtube. For example a boy explains: "In my case I've got the video showing a friend who threw himself from a springboard, jumped and hit a "panzazo" [belly flop] and broke many bones" (High school). This practice requires a more sophisticated use of Internet in conjuction with some type of videotaping device and skills. Students indicate the required skills to accomplish these tasks are in many cases self taught. This shows a trend in the way children learn to work with and through media that it is important to notice. Children learn to operate different digital devices by themselves or by looking at others. This highlights how students can develop the capacity for self-learning. In addition, students, mostly older students, value the knowledge they gain through the use of computers and acknowledge the importance to develop skills that might impact their future work or study (for example, learning digital design o fixing computers).

Ambivalent relationships with social media platforms. Even though students have previously used the computer in different social or family activities, some children consider excessive the time spent on it. Students illustrate how the time spent using the computer impacted other types of relationships. For instance, a girl comments: "Before, when I had no Internet I used to go over to my friend's house and I don't do that now hardly ever." (Female, elementary).

Facebook is a venue where students, especially high school students, can express, write ideas or feelings, mood, or write what they think of someone because it is more difficult to say it face to face. They can express themselves more freely. For instance, some students explain how they use the social media to invite someone to go out. For some students sending or getting an invitation to "friend" someone in Facebook seems to reduce the possibility or impact of being rejected. The following dialogue between high school students shows this practice.

F: Sometimes you cannot express yourself well with the person you are but out there [Facebook], yes, you can express yourself well
M: Or maybe you comment or say things that personally you do not have the courage
F: on photo log or on Facebook sometimes yes...
M: If you are talking to someone far far away, it is also easier…

Students understand the importance of being aware of the risks involved in public exposure in social media, and they are aware of the lack of control they have with what people can do with the information they publish in the network. Among salient comments illustrating this point are:
"When I'm bored I open the games on Facebook and I get disconnected in the chat so that anyone can bother me when I'm playing." (female, elementary)

"I block everything on Facebook so [people I don't care about] can not see it [the content]" (female, elementary)

The chat is also an environment where conflict can arise or expand from a face-to-face relationship and viceversa. Students describe conflictive situations specific to the context and the age. These conflicts manifest in different ways. Middle school students describe how someone can take an "evil" role disrupting the lives of other group members. This is someone "who look at you funny", who insult, envy, or mock other peers. Other type of conflict is competition that may emerge between girls in terms of who is more beautiful; or may appear among boys in terms of who is better at fighting. Children also mention that in some groups the rivalry is among neighborhoods, or even between family members. Neighborhood, groups, or family are a place of belonging and identification where children test relationships, roles, and limits. Sometimes these places become scenarios of violence, aggression and bullying, and digital devices like the cell phone can be used to record events, and upload videos into the Internet, which could be fun for some and shameful for the others. Children's explanations show these tensions:"It might happen that when chatting, you come into contact with someone who looked at you funny or who for some reasons is angry at you and he or she begins to insult you in the chat and then they come and wait for you outside school [implying a fight]." (Middle school, female). One of the groups narrated situations where other students threaten them if they tried to delete or block them. Some children minimize such situations while other took the threats seriously. The same tool they use to expand their communication with friends and family members serves to establish rivalries with potential serious consequences. These alternatives show that boys and girls hijack devices incorporating them into the context, and adapting them to their life style and ways to connect with others. This relates to the public-private tension derived from the exposure on the Internet and more broadly to the general social life. Urresti (2008) has located these conflicts within the transformation of what it means intimacy today, implying that some young people do not seem to know the limits of what they can expose to the view of others.

DISCUSSION

Research in the field of digital cultural consumption has discussed digital inequalities, and how possession of digital devices tends to be increasingly

more personalized and a marker of social class (García Canclini, 2008; Morduchowicz, 2008; Urresti, 2008). A salient trend in the data analysed shows that most students share a computer with other family members. This is indicative of the limited resources they have. As a consequence, children and families develop strategies to grant equal access to use a computer or other device, for instance, establishing a turn-taking system. Morevoer, we found that the use of computers and Internet seems to be larger than the actual possession. All students indicated they use computers and Internet even if they did not have a computer or Internet connection at home. In addition, students who owned computers might have other digital devices (i.e. cellular, playstation) than expected, considering their socioeconomical background. This seems to be the result of the assigned symbolic value and social pressure to have computer or to be connected.

Although students' preferences are heterogeneous, we highlight the prevalence of digital practices aimed at maintaining social ties alive and participation in social networks. The use of chatting, Facebook and other social media place the use of technologies primarily for recreation and communication goals. However, it is important to notice that many students widen their virtual social life with many activities face to face. This is especially true for older students, who are more independent (Morduchowicz, 2008; Pini and Musanti, 2010, 2010a, 2012; Urresti, 2008).

Children across social classes are part of the global consumption and, as a result, internalize the widespread and naturalized discourses related to the 'necessity of being connected.' The cell phone is gaining ground rapidly in the practice of staying connected as a result of aggressive marketing strategies that target young people, the multiplicity of functions they offer, and the affordable costs. The need of being connected is expressed through the time they are chatting and sending messages, and other important practices that impact children's daily routines, including family negotiation of computer use, permanent consumption of digital texts, access to music and images through all types of audiovisual products. This shows the link between cultural consumption and identity (Balardini, 2006; Spring, 2003): children engage in a wide range of experiences that define who they are. These experiences are constituted mainly by comsumption practices that

afford them with opportunities for personal enjoyment, social recognition, and the development of technological skills that they share and construct in interaction with peers.

The local spaces of everyday life (i.e. routines, sharing, etc) function as places that mediate and constitute teenagers and situate them in time. It is in that articulation between global consumption and local spaces where the fight for the meaning of any cultural practice takes place. Through virtual social networks, peer groups expand and multiply, enhance interactions and confrontation with different realities permanently, remotely and in-situ, and in real time. According to Urresti (2008) these new modes of interaction and relation with others constitute a real change in the lives of teenagers, because ten years ago this phenomenon did not exist.

These modes of interaction bring also new problems to address. The children interviewed mentioned that they understand there is risk in sharing private information. Social media platforms are understood as legitimate public scenarios where children can display behaviors comprising friendship but also aggression and, in extreme cases, bullying. Children have trouble dealing with the intricate relationship between face-to-face and digital interactions (i.e. sharing photos, comments, videos). The practices associated with the use of social digital tools generate a tension between the advantage of being part of a group and the effects of being rejected by a particular group or by a specific person.

Based on our findings, we contend that youth cultural consumption practices entail important educational implications requiring to critically reflect about school practices and school culture as well as to develop a pedagogical approach to cultural conflicts between school and young people. This approach calls for a profound communication change that embraces a dialogic approach to teaching and learning to overcome the still persistent transmission model. Such a dialogic approach will only be possible if it is grounded in teachers' desire and effort to know and understand the teenage student as a truly participant in an open dialogue. Very often the manifestations of youth cultures are judged in a light way, stigmatized or rejected. Their linguistic codes, behaviors, and aesthetic preferences are seen as su-

perficial marks of the search for identity, and the intense use of technology, as a indicator of their "dependency" of the globalized mass culture (Rabello de Castro, 2001). This limited understanding of youth culture locate adults in a place from which all dialogue is impossible.

Promoting a dialogic approach (i.e. instead of a transmission based approach) is needed to foster the transformative apropriation that the notion of critical media literacy connotes. On one hand, children are interested in multiple forms of social interaction, value emotional ties and being part of the group, and also feel unique and different. On the other hand, there is knowledge they need to learn to understand the society where they live, and the school is the place were this critical media literacy has to be developed. Even though children are acquiring and creating some new forms of digital literacy, their ability to explore and learn to operate computers or other devices by themselves is not enough to achieve digital critical literacy. Children need to learn how to: search for information, critically read the information available to them, interpret different perspectives, be able to develop criteria to select, interpret information and know how to participate in and renew a debate.

A dialogic approach that aknowledges youth identity and cultural comsumption practices requires teachers build a pedagogigal relationship with students that takes account of students' motivation, attitudes and capabilities to participate in a meaningful learning dialogue. Specifically, teachers should consider:

• Curiousity: Without fear to do something wrong children use computers to explore how the devices and software function and how to use them for their own purposes.

• Entrepreneurship: Students are eager to innovate and adapt to new situations.

• New literacy skills: Most students have developed skills to communicate and express themselves electronically and in multimodal ways.

• Sociability: Most students know how to effectively interact using social media, and appreciate the usefulness of certain knowledge to their life.

Lastly, students' background and interests need to be integrated to open the possibility for pedagogical dialogue that includes digital practices. Moreover, teaching strategies must be developed that contribute to give visibility to young people's interests, promote reflection and awareness on the use of digital goods, and increase technological abilities. Consequently, diverse alternative routes for the construction of identity will be possible in this new social environment.

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