



## Cultural identity of young habaneros: continuity, rupture and emergence of the contents of the associative subdimension

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TRANSLATION  
 OF SUMMARY

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**ABSTRACT:** The contemporary world is a context of palpable technological, media, ideological and consumer confluences, where cultural identities are reconfigured at an accelerated pace, breaking down historically shared cultural constructions in their wake. The objective of the research was to reveal the trends of continuity, rupture and emergence of the contents of the associative subdimension of the cultural identity of young people from Havana. The study was carried out in a context marked by the economic crisis that Cuba is going through, which leaves its mark on the experiences of young people and on the configuration of their cultural identity. The methodology was adjusted to the mixed design of concurrent triangulation. As results, it stands out that all the indicators of the associative sub-dimension evoked material deficiencies and limitations to deploy healthy recreational practices, sometimes disrupting traditional forms of recreation for youth; with the same negative impact on access to food.

**KEYWORDS:** Cultural identity; urban youth; customs and traditions; food customs.

## Identidad cultural de jóvenes habaneros: continuidad, ruptura y emergencia de los contenidos de la subdimensión asociativa

**RESUMEN:** El mundo contemporáneo es un contexto de palpables confluencias tecnológicas, mediáticas, ideológicas y consumistas, donde las identidades culturales se reconfiguran a un ritmo acelerado, descomponiendo a su paso construcciones culturales compartidas históricamente. El objetivo de la investigación fue desvelar las tendencias de continuidad, ruptura y emergencia de los contenidos de la subdimensión asociativa de la identidad cultural de jóvenes habaneros. El estudio se realizó en un contexto marcado por la crisis económica que atraviesa Cuba, que deja su huella en las vivencias de los jóvenes y en la configuración de su identidad cultural. La metodología se ajustó al diseño mixto de triangulación concurrente. Entre los resultados resaltó que todos los indicadores de la subdimensión asociativa evocaron carencias y limitaciones materiales para desplegar prácticas recreativas saludables, dando en ocasiones al traste con tradicionales formas de esparcimiento para la juventud; con el mismo impacto negativo en el acceso a los alimentos.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Identidad cultural; joven urbano; costumbres y tradiciones; costumbres alimenticias.

### HOW TO QUOTE

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## Introduction

The convergence of advances, setbacks and stagnation in the processes that mark the social, economic, cultural and technological development of the contemporary world, impact inter and intra-group relations and give rise to a heterogeneous intersubjectivity that is not exempt from conflicts and contradictions at different scales. As part of this, the different individual and group constructs, and in particular identities, denote greater complexity in their configuration and in the ways in which they capture and return the peculiarities of the social relations that embrace them (Morales, 2017a).

In this context, the study of cultural identities constitutes a permanent endeavor for the social sciences. Their structuring, around cultures of different degrees of legitimacy and empowerment, constitutes one of the most important processes of construction of meaning and expression of the way in which the lives of different social groups are shaped. Thinking about cultural identity from the perspective of the young population, which is one of the most important segments in any society, implies recognizing its condition as a social subject that is responsible and committed to a symbolic construction that will make it transcend generationally. In this way, the paternalism that undervalues the production and contribution of young people to their societies, and conceives them as recipients, consumers and reproducers of cultural patterns that have been given to them and of which they will always be debtors is dismissed (Morales, 2017a, 2019).

In the Cuban scenario, the analysis of the (re)configurations of the cultural identity of young people places the debate on the updating of its contents, dynamics and identifications with respect to a national culture with strong roots, connected to other cultures and in constant transformation. (Martínez Heredia, 2008; Ortiz, 1973, 2013). It involves inquiring into the relationships that condition its structuring and resonance, exploring the nuclei of comparison of selfhood with otherness, the consciousness of continuity, as well as the meanings that stand out in the process of differentiation, authentication and heterorecognition. All this is examined with a generational approach, which makes it possible to distinguish the specificities of a given group, constructed on the basis of age, political, historical, socioeconomic and cultural limits. By way of general

understanding, the study incorporated the approach of María Isabel Domínguez (1988, p. 101), for whom generation is understood as:

The set of people belonging to groups of similar ages, whose socialization at a specific historical moment conditions a common social activity (in terms of productive activity, production relations and, consequently, social and political activity) the development of the child's personality, which facilitates the creation of similar structural and subjective characteristics that give it its own physiognomy, is essential for the formation of its personality.

This study was guided by the theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions of Cuban researchers and academics, who have made their contributions under -or in collaboration with- the umbrella of the Juan Marinello Cuban Cultural Research Institute (ICIC). Carolina de la Torre (2001, 2003), Maritza García (2001, 2002) and Rolando Zamora (2000), whose positions complement each other and contributed to the construction of definitions, dimensions and starting indicators. In addition, this research recognizes the influences of several disciplines of the social sciences, and is based on social psychology, which, according to Montero (2010), is committed to a critical stance as part of the craft of science, and intends not only to reveal information of interest, but to place it in the political dialogue relevant to youth, culture and ideology in today's Cuban society, trying to insert itself in the channel of dialogue between social sciences and politics.

Among the themes reiterated in the studies on youth and identities carried out in Latin America in recent times are generational rupture, technologies, consumption, forms of participation and the ideologies that support them (Alvarado *et al.*, 2012; Martín, 2002a, 2002b; Martín *et al.*, 2017; Valenzuela, 2004, 2010, 2015). In the case of Cuba, research has located the crisis of the 1990s as a source of important ruptures in dissimilar contents of social relations, including the meanings of being young and the identities carried by this group. (Domínguez *et al.*, 2018; Morales, 2017a; 2017b, 2017c; de la Torre, 2003). Despite the scarcity of inquiries about cultural identity in specific, it can be presumed that in this field there have been mutations similar to those found in national identity, in which heterogeneity and socioeconomic inequalities are transparent (Díaz *et al.*, 2017).

This article is based on the research concluded in 2020 (Morales et al., 2020). Its objective was to unveil the trends of continuity, rupture, and emergence in the cultural identity of young residents in Havana, during the period from January 2019 to February 2020; from its cognitive dimension -communicative, valorative, and associative subdimensions- and affective. In this empirical study, cultural identity is understood as:

The construction of the subjectivity of an individual or group subject, which defines its origin and actuality, while projecting its essential and stable characteristics, sustained in the cohesion around the universe of objective and subjective elements of a culture. –artistic goods and services, customs, traditions, rituals, communicative forms and thoughts of everyday life - that are shared –the significance of these meanings allows them to recognize themselves and to establish within themselves tendencies of continuity, rupture and emergence, as well as to become aware of differences and similarities with other significant groups in a given context. (Morales et al., 2020, p. 192).

The findings presented here focus specifically on the associative subdimension, to expose the results of the activity that respond largely to the union between young people (tastes, ideas, practices), which is explored on the basis of the indicators: significant objects, recreational practices, as well as cultural and food traditions.

For the analysis of cultural identity, three key points of reference are used, based on the knowledge and experience accumulated at ICIC in research on this topic: continuity, rupture and emergence (Íñiguez, 2005; Morales, 2011; de la Torre, 2001). They refer, respectively, to identity contents where similarities with previous generations predominate, where there are clear differences, either by absence or by substantial transformations, with previous generations and, finally, where there are contents carried by previous generations, but with little extended or solidified innovations.

On the other hand, the category of youth refers to the group of people basically between 15 and 30 years of age, whose historical, social, economic and cultural conditioning, articulated with the psychological acquisitions of the preceding ages, allow them to capture and express in their subjectivity and behavior, the dynamics and

the main contradictions of their context, mediated by qualitatively superior cognitive processes and affective-motivational contents referred to personal identity, conception of the world, future projects, self-determination and independence (Morales et al., 2020; Peñate, 2021).

### **Methodology**

The inquiry in the associative subdimension of cultural identity was projected from a mixed design of concurrent triangulation (Hernández et al., 2014; Strauss and Corbin, 1998), which means that multimethod was used for the collection of quantitative and qualitative data and that the analysis and interpretation of the results was the product of all the information as a whole. However, it is important to note that more importance was given to the qualitative perspective.

The multimethods used were the questionnaire, the semantic differential and the focus group, which provided concrete elements to answer the research objective. The questionnaire applied had its antecedents in one validated in previous studies (Morales, 2011) and consisted of 14 open-ended questions that explored the components of young people's self-image and the context that conditioned the construction of their identities. On the other hand, the Semantic Differential integrated Cuban empirical antecedents (de la Torre, 2001) and current production, which made it possible to verify the distancing or complacency of young people with the characteristics indicated by 18 bipolar adjectives and, thus, to deepen the study of their self-image.

Focused or facilitator-led group discussion around a particular topic or area of expertise has been extended to the field of research on culture and communication from a qualitative approach. The conception of active subjects in the processes of reception and consumption recognizes intersubjectivity and the processes of reflexivity as a fundamental methodological strategy in the production of a feasible discourse for the construction of knowledge (Cervantes, 2002). This method made it possible to reveal the cognitive and affective contents of the associative subdimension of cultural identity, as well as those that suggested continuity, rupture and emergence. In

addition, it enriched the interpretation of the data obtained in the questionnaire applied.

For the study of the associative subdimension of cultural identity, we worked with two samples. The first, for the application of the questionnaire and the semantic differential, was made up of 187 young people between 15 and 30 years of age, of whom 61% were women and 39% men; selected through a purpose-driven sampling (Hernández et al., 2014). These instruments were applied to six groups of young students from the School of Barbering and Hairdressing -from the Artecorte community project attached to the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana-, the Urban Basic Secondary School (ESBU in Spanish), the Middle Level in Music (NMM in Spanish), the Polytechnic (PT in Spanish), the Pre-University Institute (IP in Spanish) and also to young religious students. The teaching centers were located in five municipalities of Havana: Plaza de la Revolución, Playa, Habana Vieja, Diez de Octubre and Habana del Este.

The selection of educational centers and central and peripheral municipalities of the capital, through purpose-driven sampling, was intended to select a sample usually excluded from the studies carried out in the country and specifically in the capital. These are young people who, as a trend, are made invisible through the singular use of the term youth, which does not recognize the historical, social, cultural, and relational construction of the production of the different types of youth. Most of the young people in this study were those who were neither in the large educational institutions nor generally associated with the vanguard of political organizations. These, rather, dropped out of school, were enrolled in vocational courses sponsored by community projects, or had uneven educational trajectories and were enrolled in polytechnics - where they will eventually have difficulties to enter the labor market - and pre-universities with no clear intention of continuing university studies. Furthermore, these schools are not municipal reference centers or are located in peripheral municipalities of the province. The purpose of all these elements was to obtain data that provided clarity on the processes of homogenization and differentiation inherent to the cultural identity of this population segment.

A multilevel sample was also chosen for the application of the focus group, so that the young people who participated in this phase were selected from another population of the same universe. (Hernández *et al.*, 2014). This sample was made up of 13 students from the School of Barbering and Hairdressing. Finally, the sample consisted of 200 young residents of the country's capital.

The research process used grounded theory in the alternative of systematic design and phenomenological design in its empirical psychological aspect, focused on the study of the experience and experiences of adolescents and young people, related to the aspects that define, resemble, and unite them, and which, at the same time, differentiate them from other age groups, mainly adults. The quantitative data were inserted in the central scheme, with a non-experimental design, descriptive in scope. (Hernández *et al.*, 2014; Íñiguez y Muñoz, 2004; Sautu, 2005; Sautu *et al.*, 2005; Sautu, 2005; de Souza, 2010; de Souza *et al.*, 2007; Strauss y Corbin, 1998).

Consequently, qualitative methods that favor the researcher-subject researched relationship were privileged, which implies the recognition of the active participation of the subjects in the production of data, becoming experts on themselves and their context. In addition, Carolina de la Torre (2001, pp. 110-111) stresses:

The relevance of boundaries in inter and intra-identity relations, whose demarcation is based on similarities and differences, which are not always essential, stable or totally objective; they may be relative, changing, emerging and socially constructed, bringing with them greater or lesser homogeneity or heterogeneity within each identity, group or category. Boundaries can be objective and real, but also subjective and constructed; therefore, in order for them to work, they must be perceived as such, without ignoring their value of continuity. This process is socially conditioned, and in this order points out that the contents and contours of identities become more evident and conscious, according to the concrete experiences and manipulations created and reinforced from power.

Finally, the psychosocial approach was assumed, which includes the interpenetration of the macro, the micro and the individual, expressed in the connection between the processes that occur at the personal, group and more general

societal levels. (Martín-Baró, 1983; Montero, 2010; Morales, 2017a; 2017b; 2017c). Hence, identities are studied based on the subjectivity of adolescents and young people as individuals and members of small groups, but with the understanding that their subjective constructions constitute a social (re)production contextualized by a framework of institutions, policies, and meanings of a given historical moment. Hence the inquiry into the perception of opportunities and limitations in personal development. Therefore, the characterization of identity expressions was conceived in its dimensions: cognitive - shared self-knowledge -, affective - as feelings generated by belonging - and behavioral.

The qualitative data emerging from the open-ended questions of the questionnaire were categorized in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and converted into numerical values for analysis with the SPSS statistical package for Social Sciences, using descriptive statistics for single and multiple responses, as appropriate.

In the analysis process, comparisons were made between the qualitative and quantitative databases, from which quantitative, qualitative, and mixed inferences or meta-inferences were derived, which are connected to the findings and conclusions. Triangulation of information from various tools and consistency with previous research results provided robustness to the analysis and conclusions. At the same time, the divergences found were understood as an expression of the complexity of the research process, which served as a basis for the critical review of the theoretical and methodological references used.

The procedures followed during the application of the techniques were in accordance with the ethical standards of the scientific and editorial committee of the ICIC, the institution that supervised the execution of the research in question, requesting informed consent from all members of the sample.



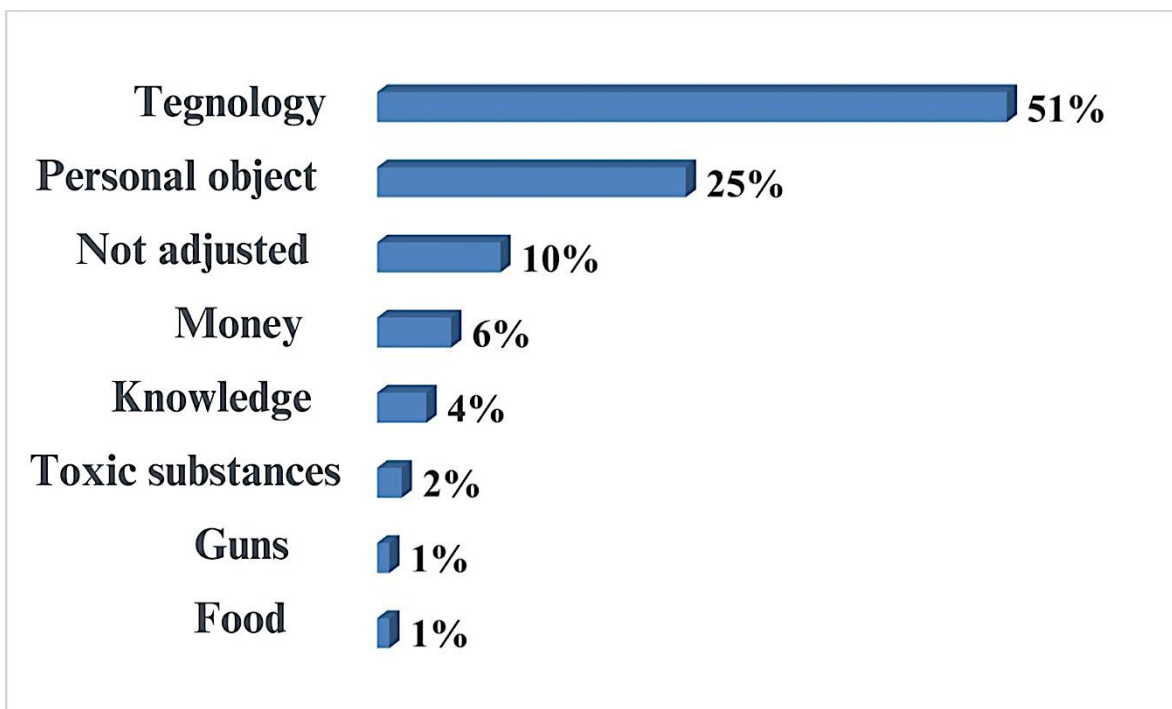
## Results

The ways in which people organize their daily interactions and practices, as well as the mediations that intervene in the socialization processes, are also part of the notion of cultural identity assumed in the research. Hence, we explore, in its associative subdimension, the resulting network of objects and significant people, cultural practices, and traditions, with emphasis on recreational and food practices.

### *Significant objects for young people*

For the young people studied, the most significant objects were related to the socioeconomic and technological context in which they live. This is why the Technology category (51%) had the primacy as shown in Figure 1. Of the three objects that young people could mention as the most important in their daily lives, on average, 2.7 responses concerned some technological element or one linked to this area: “phone, headphones, PC, tablet, game consoles, internet”.

**Figure 1.** Significant objects according to young respondents.



Source: Own work

The cell phone was the most important device for young people, due to the convergence of applications and possibilities it offers for communication, leisure, organization and self-improvement. Its penetration was so relevant that the interviewees in the focus group pointed out the favorable predisposition to the permanent location or connection to the Internet and the displeasure as the main subjective consequence of the separation or the exhaustion of the package of megabytes for such access: “In the morning I listen to music all the time when I go to school and if I don’t have my phone I feel strange, and when I have data I’m connected all the time [...] and when you run out of megabytes you feel bad”. “I can’t live without the telephone because there is the person who is going to call you, the music [...] I do want to be located”.

However, in this space, a clear intra-group distinction was observed between those who made the above comments, whose age ranged between 17 and 20 years, and those over 26 years of age, who reported a higher level of cell phone independence, which may have been conditioned by the establishment of the link with these objects at later ages of psychological development: “I have the phone out of necessity because honestly I feel much better when I don’t have it with me, I don’t like to be located. The phone sometimes bothers me or interrupts me when I’m doing something [...] that sometimes is more important than the call.”. “We used to be freer when we didn’t have a phone. Sometimes you go to spend a little while with your friends and they are checking a conversation they are supposedly having in real time on WhatsApp and they are not taking advantage of the moment they are with you.”.

In second place, personal objects were referred to (25%), highlighting “clothes and shoes”, and with this, the satisfaction of needs for social recognition and self-affirmation typical of the age group. Without statistical relevance, but important from the qualitative analysis, contents associated with Money (6%), Knowledge (4%), Toxic substances (2%), Food (1%) and Weapons (1%) emerged. The allusion to money and toxic substances: “cigarettes (most of them); smoking, drinking”, both in the questionnaire and in the focus

group, indicated their positioning in the cultural universe of young people, which is now more complex with the clear reference to the carrying of bladed weapons: “the knife, the knife”.

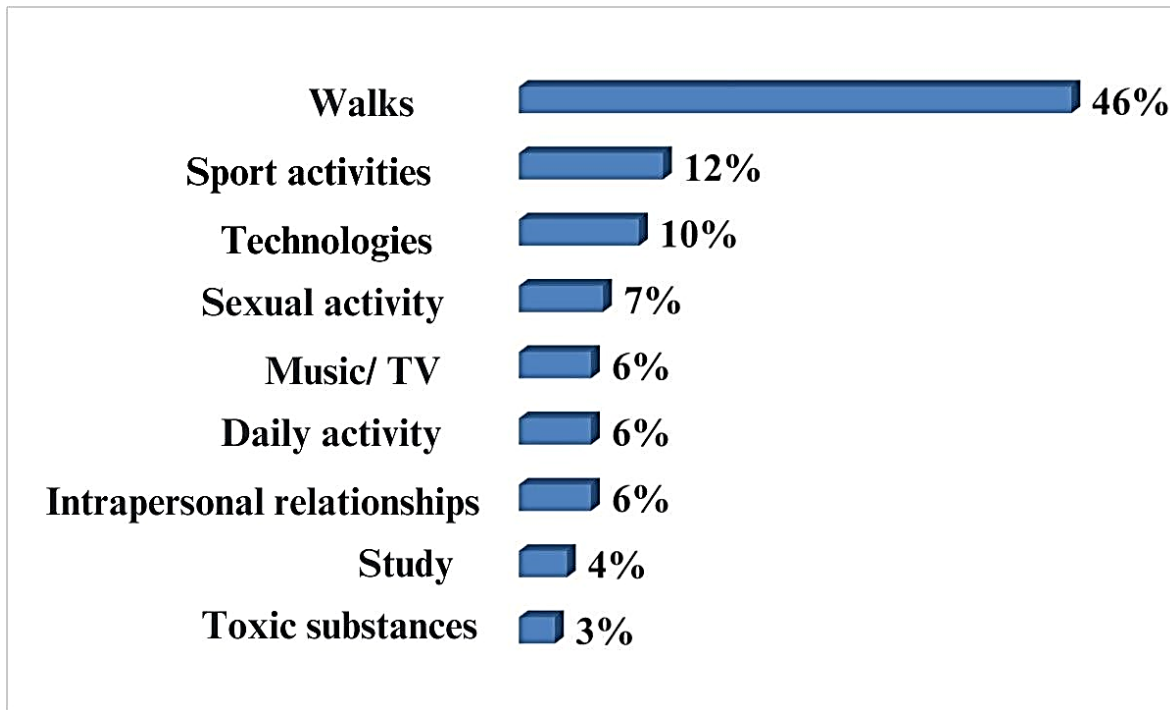
The acquisition of knowledge in any variant continues to be a preferred option for young people, since the objects that represented it were hardly mentioned: “books”; meanwhile, food marked its presence from the lack: “eating well”. Finally, there was a set of responses Not adjusted (10%) to the question, but which underlined the importance of recreation, couple relationships, social recognition and sexual activity as peculiarities of this generation: “partying; a partner who makes you happy; getting along with neighbors; popularity; sex”.

In the case of the groups of young people studied, and probably outside of them, the object world was marked by the technologies of the time. The digital world has energized the different areas of interpersonal, intergroup and social relations in general, despite the country’s limitations in this area.

### ***Cultural recreational practices: activities, companies and preferred locations***

Cultural practices are recognized as an indissoluble part of cultural identity and include a variety of aspects; those that tend to last for long periods of time and allow recognition of the specificities of certain groups can be catalogued as traditions. In this case, we inquired into those associated with recreation, exploring the preference for certain activities, companies and traditional entertainment venues (Colombres, 2014; de la Torre, 1995; Zamora, 2000).

The preferred recreational activities were mainly linked, as shown in Figure 2, to Outings (46%), parties and experiences outside the home, those who in general expressed versatility in the options and indicated the need to go beyond the physical boundaries imposed by the home: “beach, swimming pools; camping; going out at night”, with little reference to attendance at theaters and cinemas.

**Figure 2.** Preferred recreational activities according to the surveyed youth.

Source: Own work

The second place went to Sports (12%), chosen mainly by men (60%), the most popular activities are team games such as soccer, ball games and, to a lesser extent, physical exercise and swimming. This emphasized, once again, the importance given by young people to socialization with others, interaction and exchange as a distinctive feature of the cultural identity of this stage of development.

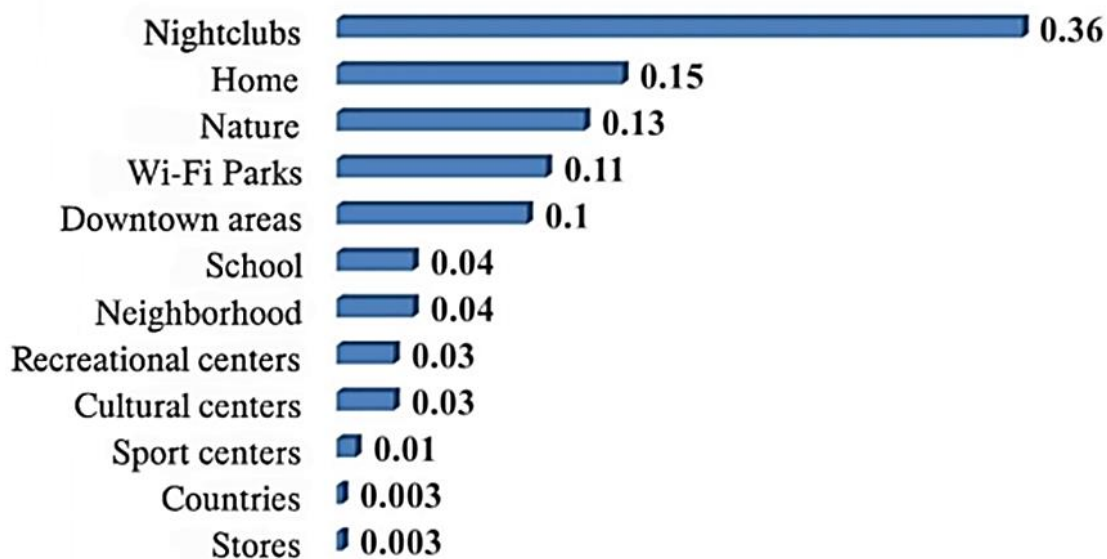
In third position were Technology (10%), Sexual Activity (7%), Daily Activity (6%), Music/TV (6%) and Interpersonal Relationship (6%). Regarding the former, the narratives were oriented to the interaction with the cell phone or other similar artifact: “going online; playing video games; texting; taking selfies to post on Facebook.” On the other hand, the comments associated with sexual activity had an unfavorable connotation, and were not associated with affective feelings: “sex; fucking; xxx videos”. Likewise, the answers referred to daily activity -also the majority of men (61%)- pointed concretely to simple actions: “eating; sleeping; peeling; bathing” that were linked to the restoration of physical conditions. The percentage of the Music/TV category was curious: “listening to music;

watching series and movies”, since, according to the antecedents, a greater presence was expected (Linares et al., 2008; Linares et al., 2010). Finally, Interpersonal Relationship distinguished the emphasis on affectivity among friends: “enjoy among friends; go out with my friends; talk with friends”, so that another variant of the analysis of this category could be merged with Walk, representing 52%.

The allusion to study (4%) as a pleasurable practice within the cultural identity continued to be a marked minority. Finally, it was estimated, based on the repetition of toxic substances (3%) in this and other indicators analyzed, that this practice is deeply rooted in a sector of the young population.

The cultural appropriations transited in a special way through interpersonal relationships, since it was precisely human beings who encoded and decoded the meanings anchored in the objects. Hence, in recreational practices -for respondents and interviewees in the focus group- friends (41%) were the figures selected per excellence to act as significant companions in the activities and spaces preferred. References to family members were made by evoking the group itself or by mentioning specific members (parents, siblings, cousins and aunts and uncles). The grouping of these appellations placed family in second position (27%) followed by partner (25%). According to these data, recreation, which is the priority of these subjects, came hand in hand with friends and family, who are the fundamental channels of their socialization.

On the other hand, the favorite places mentioned by respondents and interviewees were consistent with the preferred activities mentioned above, as shown in Figure 3. Nightclubs of various types (36%), whether bars, discotheques or parties, came in first place. It was presumed that this preference generated significant dissatisfaction, as the focus group and questionnaire data indicated that such spaces were extremely costly, when compared to personal and family income in general; this conditioned the planning and attendance to these facilities: “on weekends when there is money”.

**Figure 3.** Favorite places for recreational practices according to the surveyed youth.

Source: Own work

This situation was dealt with in different ways: some reordering or constraining the consumption of this sphere; relocating the gatherings; replacing the spaces for ones that require a smaller budget, wondering about the interactions with friendships and maintaining the inclination for the public sphere in a design close to the initial intention. Others show a greater frustration, less flexibility and ability to develop an alternative in view of the limited economic situation of the country. Important changes took place that restricted the satisfaction of their recreational needs: “The important thing is the experience one lives with their friendships. The time I’ve gone without money have been more fun than the ones with money, because we don’t have the worry, it is what it is in the moment, and it has taught me the value of money, of friendships, of all”; “My experience is different, because I don’t go out if I don’t have money, to spend work, you need to go to the bars with 30,00 CUC”.

In addition to this, the young adults pointed towards the lack of time as another cause that affected the satisfaction of their recreational needs, as the accumulation of responsibilities or projects favors the eternal postponement and the change in recreational

options. The narratives conveyed: “We are talking a lot of money and sometimes we have money, but not the time to go to any place. It happens to me that all my friends have a plan and everyone goes their own way. Sometimes people think that money is what has more value and what is more valuable is time”.

On second instance, the Homes, of the couple or some friend (15%) was placed between the favorite places for recreation: “There is no money, but my house is always full of friends playing Play Station, dominoes or cards. They are friends of mine, of my parents, of my boyfriend”. Other places that were preferred among the youth were those which lets them enjoy Nature (13%) directly: “beach; camping; countryside”, the Wi-Fi Parks (11%) for internet connection, and the Downtown areas (10%) of Vedado and La Habana Vieja: “Malecon; Coppelia”. All of these outings that seemed cheaper than the Nightclubs. According to the interviewees: “To have a good time you don’t need the money, that you are just there with friends and say let’s go to the beach, and you take a bus and go and have a good time. And if some money appears we buy a beer, we share”.

Without statistical significance, School (4%), Neighborhood (4%), Cultural centers (3%): “cinema, theater, museum, concert”, Recreational centers (3%): “restaurants, hotels”, and Sport centers (1%); as well as Stores (0.3%) and Countries (0.3%) were mentioned. With regards to the support of cultural spaces, in the group discussion criteria were expressed by youth and young adults, which pointed out to the perception of the decrease of public actions that favor the attendance of youths to the theater and other cultural venues, leaving more room for the proposal of the bars. In that regard, they remarked: “When I was a younger, there were a lot more projects of fun things to do and now it’s stuck in bars and there’s nothing more. Parties were held in the parks, there even a lot of stage plays. And now you stand there and say where there is a party. There are no parties. People don’t go out because they don’t have money. And there is nothing to do”; “Sometimes I don’t understand that I have to go to a place where they would charge me five times the price of what something costs, and at the end you stay with the fact that you spent 40 dollars and you don’t even feel dizzy, that the drink wasn’t even well prepared and they treated me poorly”.

### *Cultural traditions for young people*

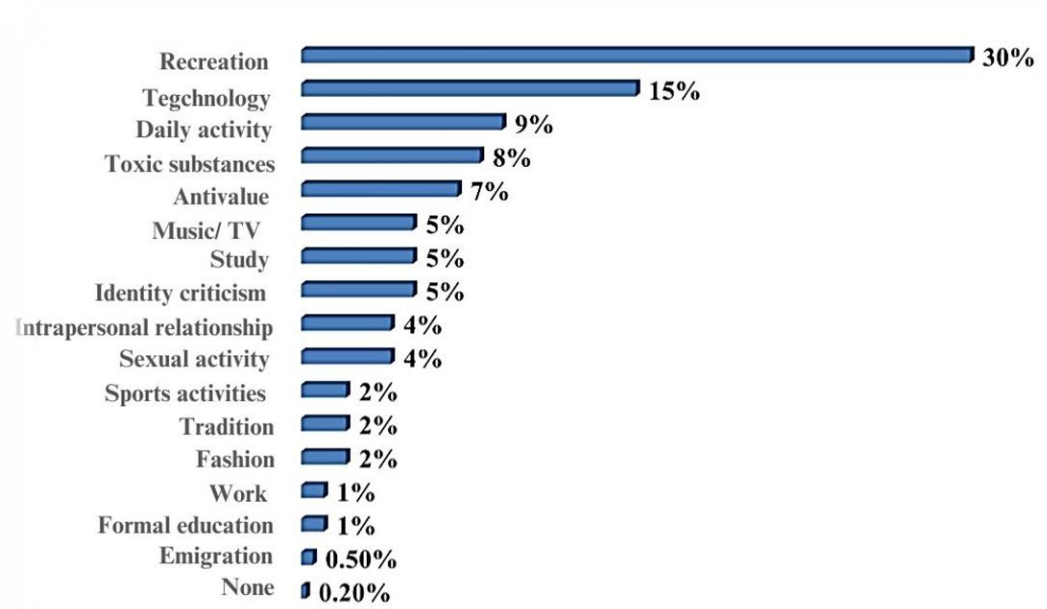
The exploration of long-standing cultural practices of recognized cultural significance, assumed as cultural traditions, yielded discrete information. In the responses of the young people - surveyed and in the focus group - no recognition or appropriation of usages belonging to previous generations was noted, the development of their own cultural, political, social or recreational customs.

In general, the contents evoked by the respondents stated aspects already analyzed in previous indicators, as shown in Figure 4. Recreation (30%) and Technology (15%) were once again ranked in the hierarchy. Their articulation produced the presence in social networks of recreational activities, through the publication of personal and group photos, as well as the obtaining of likes on Facebook, which dynamized new ways of interaction: “spending time in front of a screen, taking pictures wherever you want”; “logging on every day to see how many likes your photo gets”.

Categories Daily activity (9%), Toxic substances (8%), Antivalor (7%), Music/TV (5%)—referred mainly by people with black skin (41%)—, Criticism of identity (5%), Sexual activity (4%), Fashion (2%) and None (0.2%); they exposed from different areas how young people have incorporated unhealthy behaviors – described from the point of view of acceptance or rejection-; that advocate vulgarity, banality, consumerism and vagrancy. Due to the novelty of its contents, it is extended by:

- Daily activity: “Sleeping all day; asking for snacks from colleagues”.
- Toxic substances: “Pill-popping; drinking a lot of coffee in the morning and alcohol in the afternoon-evening”.
- Antivalor: “Swearing, going out without permission and being late; disturbing people; disrespecting, being irresponsible; stealing; playing loud music, damaging social property; cuteness”.
- Música/TV: “Música repartera”.
- Criticism of identity: “To entertain oneself in things that are not very useful; to be given everything, to not work, to the easy life; to waste time”.
- Sexual activity: “Fucking; sex; unloading”.



**Figure 4.** Cultural traditions according to the young people surveyed.

Source: Own work

Only the categories Study (5%): “go to school”; Interpersonal relationship (4%): “cooking as a family; spending time with family; being loyal to friends”; Sports activity (2%): “playing some sports; exercising”; Tradition (2%), Work (1%) and Formal education (1%): “courtesy, respect”, were allusive to favorable qualities in the daily dynamics of young people.

In terms of Tradition, only the well-known photos for the celebration of the Quinceañera for women were placed – mainly referred to by ESBU students (86%) - and other practices that transcended the juvenile sphere: “Taking your 15th birthday photos, college graduation trip; eating steak on the 31st, bathing in the first downpour of May”. In any case, they did not reveal innovation. On the other hand, as for the identification with the condition of being Cuban, the images described did not denote a variety of affections. The approaches tended to have the same order and no fractionation was observed within the sample. In this regard the following narratives: “I love my land. I am guajiro, I like the land, I like the customs”; “The values you get here. The way we are. We like to party; we like to go out. There are countries where it’s computers all the time, although here we also have a tremendous vice with technology, but it’s not the same”.

### *Food for young people*

In terms of cultural practices related to food, the influence of the disadvantageous national economic situation that has marked the country in recent times was noted, the food supply has worsened in recent years, which has significantly impoverished the quality of the food supply, quantity and variety required to satisfy the traditional dietary pattern.

There was a predominant tendency among young people to consume unhealthy or junk food (53%), this must have been associated with the growing supply of this type of products in different variants and through different channels, reproducing hegemonic models: “Very bad, the stores are empty and there are no knick-knacks for the children.”

Consumption of healthy food (21%) -fruits, vegetables and proteins- was lower and Italian food (17%), the latter with exclusive reference to pizzas and spaghetti. Cuban food (9%) had little relevance and in general was not represented in the most recognized dishes in the culinary culture, but in those foods that were more easily managed in everyday life: “black beans, avocado and boiled egg”. On the other hand, very few favored the American Meal (1%), expressly alluding to the hamburger that reproduces the McDonald’s style.

By way of summary, Table 1 shows the favorable or unfavorable similarities of the contents of the categories that emerged in the three indicators of the evaluative subdimension of the cultural identity of the young people studied.

**Table 1.** Summary of the relationship between the categories of the associative subdimension of youth cultural identity.

Significant objects	Cultural recreational practices		Cultural traditions
	Favorite activities	Favorite places	
Not adjusted		Night clubs	
		Home	Recreation
	Walks	Nature	Music / TV
	Music / TV	Downtown areas	Interpersonal relationships
	Interpersonal relationships	Neighborhood Recreational centers Cultural centers	
Technologies	Technologies	Wi-Fi Park	Technologies
Knowledge	Study	School	Study
			Formal education

–	Sports activities	Sports centers	Sports activities
Toxic substances	Toxic substances	–	Toxic substances
Personal item	–	Store	Fashion
Money	–	–	–
Food	Daily activity	–	Daily activity
Not adjusted	Sexual activity	–	Sexual activity
Weapons	–	–	Antivalor Identity Criticism
–	–	Countries	Emigration

Source: Own work

The close relationship between the indicators studied in this subdimension and the indicators studied in this subdimension – significant objects, favorite activities and places and cultural traditions – expressed the consistency and coherence of the results obtained in the research. Neither significant companies nor food traditions were included in this grouping, since the nature of their content did not favor comparison.

### Discussion

Cultures have crystallized in objects of different types, which have made it possible over time to know the particularities of the subjects and their interactions. There were important coincidences in the perceptions of the young people and the different cultural practices that centered socialization in their daily lives. The mediations highlighted three main aspects: adaptation to the country’s economic conditions, the development of technology and age-related psychological regularities. Despite the country’s limited telecommunications infrastructure, the most feasible technological equipment -mobiles, tablets, USB speakers-mediated, in general, interpersonal, intergroup and social relations and, therefore, were a source of information and cultural formation. Around them most of the young people built their community.

Other mediations, relevant due to their qualitative connotation, since their reiteration was a minority, were the allusion to money, cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, bladed weapons, sex without affection and antisocial behavior. These objects and ways of behavior

have been included as relevant currency in interpersonal relationships, while concentrating cultural expressions, coinciding with some of the results of Díaz et al. (2017). These expressions could be linked to the need for autonomy, independence and rebelliousness, channeled from the assumption of accepted behaviors in the groups to which they belong and which guarantee a place. These elements highlight the growing presence of objects that studies traditionally place in the profile of marginalized groups, coinciding with the results obtained by Morales et al. (2002), in socially disadvantaged youth populations.

With regard to significant objects, such as the use of cell phones, positions that ranged from absolute attachment to rejection were observed. Some young people underlined the concern caused by the uninterrupted connection of their peers when they were socializing in groups, emphasizing the importance of affectivity and the delimitation of the role assigned to technologies.

Recreational cultural practices emphasized activities aimed at meeting, interacting and socializing with peers, through group enjoyment of artistic and gastronomic options or those related to interaction with nature. However, it can be seen that consumption in state or private spaces is being replaced by the domestic sphere or open spaces due to their economic inaccessibility. Similar results were obtained by other Cuban studies, carried out from the conceptualization of recreation at the Centro de Estudios Sobre la Juventud (Colectivo de autores, 2013), such as those that obeyed the theorization of consumption and cultural participation proposed by the ICIC (Linares et al., 2008).

On the other hand, an important psychological regularity for this stage of life was ratified by maintaining, contemporaries and relatives, the centrality in the socialization processes that channeled cultural appropriations. The maternal figure was at the center of family mediation, consistent with the patriarchal model that places women at the core of the formative and communicative processes in the domestic sphere.

In terms of recreational activities, young people re-signified the traditional use of some spaces in order to adjust their aspirations and consumption patterns to their deficient socioeconomic conditions. As an alternative to low purchasing power, the domestic sphere emerges as a space for recreation, already reported in studies of cultural consumption. This

implies the spiritual withdrawal of individuals and groups and, therefore, a forced change with respect to recreational practices of previous generations.

In the area of food traditions, Cuban cuisine was relegated by the preference for junk food and Italian food. The deteriorating economic scenario in the country has impoverished the presence of authentic Creole food in the domestic and public space, which has led to the proliferation of gastronomic offerings typical of international fast food and Italian cuisine.

In general, few traditions preserved, restored or elaborated by the young population were recognized. The ways currently assumed for recreation emphasize those related to access to cell phones and social networks. In addition, the deconfiguration of the Havana manifestations of youth cultures, mainly settled in G Street and the Malecón (Pañellas, 2019), during the first decades of the present millennium, was impressive. The adult-centered and stigmatizing interventions -in many cases- coerced the youth behaviors that burst into the capital's scenario, appropriating important spaces and communicating forms of existence of youth that were different from the known, established and controlled ones.

Along with recognition came debate and combat, and for this generation this meant demobilization, a return to routine as a social group and the loss of autonomy and identity. At present, the ephemeral structuring of the various teams that populated Havana's downtown areas (Pañellas, 2019) made us think of the transience and fragility of innovations. The young people studied are unaware of their potential to produce and transform symbols that identify their era, and tend to reproduce foreign patterns.

The distinctive features of cultural identity were strongly impacted by the unfavorable socioeconomic context and the increase in poverty, inequalities and exclusions, which contrasts with the rise of respect for gender and sexual orientation diversities. Belonging to different socio-class groups appeared as the essential substratum of distinctions, and of the recognition of the plurality of appropriations and manifestations of cultural identity, the groups of young people studied did not show substantial differences in terms of demographic, occupational or territorial characteristics, so that the heterogeneity found did not affect the homogeneity of identity.

Finally, we would like to highlight that, although much has been discussed about the social conditioning of ages, psychological age, the cultural construction of ages and the generational construction of culture (Domínguez, 2006; Feixa, 1996; Morales, 2017c), biological age is a fundamental marker for determining the stage of youth. In our opinion, the present research did not escape from this constraint, which is established, in the light of all the production in question, as a methodological limitation.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, we can comment that the identity construction of the young people studied is contextualized and transversalized by ideological, axiological and socioeconomic aspects, which reflect tensions currently present in the country. The unfavorable economic situation has a direct impact on the increase of social inequalities; equidistant from the notions of equity and social justice advocated by social policies. At the same time, the criticized culture of *having*, of capitalist and consumerist origin, is beginning to take root once again, rivaling the preference for precepts that dignify human beings; as well as the extension and deepening of the influence of hegemonic cultural models as opposed to the ascendancy of autochthonous and counter-hegemonic patterns. The concurrence of these conditions is mediated by the challenging and unavoidable appropriation of digital technologies and platforms.

In the content of the associative subdimension, sociability and affective relationships stood out for young people, where continuity was observed in what was recognized as Cuban cultural identity. Systematic and open interaction stood out, favoring friends and family and taking advantage of the different existing spaces, but undermined by the superficiality of enriching traditions and customs.

There was a strong transversalization of technologies in all spheres, regardless of the infrastructure that supports it, where the confluence of cultural and generational identity was visualized, while its most important uses were focused on socializing and belonging to real groups -offline- and virtual groups -online- (Facebook, WhatsApp). In the associative order, there was a predominance of preference for contacts between peers, through direct

links or using digital technologies, as well as cultural practices centered on fun and entertainment, with a tendency towards the group, settled in private spaces in order to signify socioeconomic status. There was no recognition of the gestation of their own traditions, nor the reproduction of the customs of previous generations.

The qualities related to the associative subdimension attributed to the young people were accompanied by positive affect. However, we should not lose sight of the presence of uncritical positions towards inappropriate behaviors, even socially reprehensible ones.

Within the sample there are diverse forms of cultural identities, which could be grouped into three variants that are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but rather concomitant: traditional, updated and emerging. The first refers to a more traditional form of cultural identity, conforming to and legitimizing the pre-established patterns of Cuban culture and youth. The second refers to a cultural identity that has incorporated contents derived from national and foreign cultural models generated in recent times, which makes it potentially productive and innovative. In the third and last variant, the assimilation of national and foreign cultural models generated in recent times predominates, and tends to the loss of traditional contents, with a strong conditioning of the deterioration of the economic and social conditions of the country.

The results of this research made possible exchanges on the subject between researchers and decision-makers from institutes, councils and directorates in order to harmonize conceptions and devise strategies aimed at strengthening or reconfiguring cultural identity, especially for young people.

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