

Global Youth Cultures and Amazonian Indigenous Adolescence¹

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Abstract

For Amazonian indigenous youths, global youth cultures offer a space for new conduct, manners and the crossing of cultural and social borders. In particular, in Amazonia participation in youth cultures appears to be related to the educational sphere, including school, studying, and being a student. This article discusses the meaning of global youth cultures for Amazonian indigenous youths. It addresses the different spaces and times in which indigenous young people embody representations from global youth cultures by presenting a case study of indigenous young people in urban and rural areas of Acre state, Brazil. The analysis is divided into four different levels: indigenous youths relating to non-indigenous youth, to the dominant society, to older generations within their communities, and to other indigenous youths. The last level of analysis shows the Amazonian indigenization of youth cultures.

Introduction

Youth cultures are a complex of various layered subcultures, and thus there is no single, homogenous youth culture. Furthermore, youth culture does not only refer to a sort of counterculture (Brake 1985); rather there are features that are common to all youth cultures. As Renato Ortiz (1998:62) has shown, clothing such as jeans and the type of shoes young people wear, as well as their taste in music, are all representations of global youth cultures that cross national borders. Youth culture is an example of a global process, similar to, for example, consumption. Global youth cultures are deterritorialised, because certain times, such as leisure time, or places can be marked by the use of attitudes and activities typical for the youths globally or nationally (Massey 1998). Certain sites, such as town squares, as well as venues for activities organized specifically for youths, are usually the spaces where young people can hang out and pass time, and in these places youth cultures are produced and become visible. Helena Wulff (1995) has noticed that due to their different clothing, mobility,

and tastes, youth have more power than children, since youth can wilfully show their difference from adults, as well as their own values and thoughts.

This article looks at Amazonian indigenous young people and their relation to global youth cultures. It will focus on those cultural representations and activities of Amazonian young people that differ from the other age groups in their communities, namely adults and children. The question is: what meaning do these representations and activities hold for today's indigenous youth? Most Amazonian young people have access to music, clothing, and other style choices of youth from the dominant society. They continuously negotiate their relation to dominant society and kinship group (usually representing their ethnic origin). Their relation to these two social constructs defines their corporeal ways of being and constitutes their values in everyday action. This article will focus on indigenous youth in Brazilian Amazonia both in urban and rural areas.

In Lowland South America the adolescent years of indigenous people have been studied from the viewpoint of developmental psychology, presenting different stages in the life cycle of indigenous communities (e.g. Oberg 1949, 1953; Fernandes 1988[1948]). In many of the earliest ethnographies, adolescence has been mentioned in the age-set systems as a liminal period preparing the person for adulthood or pre-adulthood. According to Florestan Fernandes' (1988[1948]:220-259) age categories, young people aged from 15 to 25 years learn to perform new activities, for example, young boys learn to make arrows, hunt, and fish, whilst young girls assume certain domestic tasks. Furthermore, in Amazonian indigenous communities, youthhood has been taken as a key social construct, especially in studies of initiation rituals at puberty, a central aspect of almost all indigenous sociocosmologies, even though these rituals may vary considerably in content from one community to another. Scholars working in distant geographical locations have shown that indigenous youth's bodily changes at puberty led to rites of passage and then to marriage and the establishment of a household unit (see e.g. Oberg 1949, 1953; Fernandes 1988[1948]; Hugh-Jones 1979; Fabian 1992; Lagrou 1998). Hence, this process meant a shift from childhood to adulthood. Initiation rituals have usually been approached as a sequence of rigorous discipline, training and regulations through which indigenous youths acquire full membership in society and through which gender is constructed. In my previous studies, I have looked at how young people experience and interpret such rituals (Virtanen 2006; 2007a; 2007b).

In recent Youth Studies, the concepts of youth and adolescence have been employed as sociological categories referring to a person who is physically and psychologically nearly adult, independent of parents, developing their own value system and worldview, and on the verge of acquiring an independent position within their family and society. There are no clear boundaries defining this period of youth, though it is commonly used to refer to people aged 16 to 25. Moreover, the key point as far as we are concerned here is what being young means in cultural terms, as youth is interpreted differently in different cultures. Youth is a social age insofar as the characteristics exhibited by youths and the transformations in their habitats vary according to societies, cultures, ethnicities, social classes, and gender (Esteinou 2005:26-27, 36; Valentine et al. 1998:5-6; Fornäs 1995:3). Even if there are some common aspects of youth in different geographical locations, what is considered adolescence differs according to place, time, gender, and ethnicity among other factors.

In Brazil, since the 1980s, when the question of indigenous education first arose, numerous studies have been carried out on indigenous schools and the education of particular indigenous groups. Nevertheless, the voice of indigenous youths has seldom been heard. More recently, there has been a growing interest in indigenous children as social actors (Overing 1988; Nunes 1999; Cohn 2000; Lopez da Silva et al. 2002). The first media appearances of the contemporary Brazilian indigenous youth population were for negative reasons, such as the suicides of young Indians in Northern Brazilian Amazonia and Southern Brazil. These suicides were interpreted as a loss of self-esteem and cultural identity, resulting from the destruction of their environment and lands (Arnt 1991; Ribeiro 2000[1995]:235).³

When speaking about contemporary cultural representations of indigenous youth, power relations and the historical context must be taken into consideration. Indigenous young people have recently been acknowledged as Brazilian youths, but also as members of their own distinct group. Brazilian indigenous youth have been portrayed together with non-indigenous youth as part of Brazilian youth and as their own distinct group, that has organized in order to discuss issues that touch them as indigenous young people. In national and regional Youth Conferences, indigenous youth have been regarded as a Brazilian minority group, like Afro descendants, sexual minorities, or landless people. In addition to the Ministry of Education, which is the government institution responsible for indigenous affairs, the Catholic church, and the indigenous movement itself have all slowly started to see Indian youths as a unique social group (e.g. Secretaria Nacional de Juventude 2006).

A study of Amazonian indigenous young people and adolescence is relevant and timely for a wide number of reasons. In general, the young people of today have access to many diverse elements with which to build their worldviews. Young people are in the process of seeking answers to their own individual development. Focusing on the younger generation makes sense since they are the future of these peoples and, consequently, of the Amazon region as a whole. In recent years, the trajectory of indigenous adolescents into adulthood has included many new influences, some of the biggest of which are technological developments, changes in their natural environments, a rise in economic wealth and consumer culture, increased access to education, the impact of mass media, and urbanization.

Urbanization is a global question for today's indigenous youth population. The rapid population increase of indigenous peoples in the urban centres of Lowland South America means that studies on indigenous peoples can no longer be limited to remote areas, and a few studies have already been produced on Indians living in Amazonian cities (e.g. Ferri 1990; Andrello 2006; Lasmar 2005). According to IBGE – *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (2005), the biggest age group among the indigenous population living in urban Brazil is 15 to 19 years old, followed by those aged 20 to 24. This data also shows the need for a study of this age set, which is precisely what my research seeks to provide. My studies have added a Brazilian, Amazonian, and urban dimension to the existing literature on indigenous youth (e.g. Virtanen 2006; 2007a; 2007b). This article focuses on the question of indigenous youth in relation to global youth cultures. The study is an attempt to present youth as active agents and to show how they are concerned about their world (see Wulff 1995).

Studying Amazonian Indigenous Youth in Acre State, Brazil

My first fieldwork with Amazonian indigenous youth was carried out in April 2003 in Acre state, Northwestern Brazil. Between 2003 and 2008, I spent some two years in Acre, in Rio Branco, the state capital, which has a total population of 305,731, and in indigenous territories, particularly the Manchineri territory of Mamoadate (*Terra Indígena Mamoadate*). I chose to study principally the Manchineri since they were the third biggest indigenous population residing in Rio Branco (GMI-UNI 2002)⁴, and there was little ethnographic information on them. In order to gain a better understanding of the lived worlds of urban

indigenous adolescents, and because the number of urban Manchineri adolescents was so small, I also interviewed Apurinã and Cashinahua youngsters in the same age group during my stay in Acre. Apurina, Cashinahua and Manchineri are representatives of the three largest indigenous groups to have migrated to Rio Branco. In this study I have included interviews with 72 Manchineri youths who live in indigenous territory (37 females and 35 males), and in Rio Branco 18 Manchineris (5 females and 13 males), 24 Apurinãs (13 females and 11 males) as well as 24 Cashinahuas (15 females and 9 males), all aged from 14 to 24 years.

The Manchineri, an Arawakan-speaking group, number some 900 people in the reserve, and approximately 130 in Rio Branco (GMI-UNI 2002; FUNAI 2005). Since the end of the 19th century, the Manchineri were forced to work in the rubber industry. In 1975, Manchineris were granted land, the Mamoadate reserve that covers 313,647 hectares. Besides hunting, fishing and gathering, they carry out small-scale agricultural activities and animal husbandry. In Rio Branco, Manchineri families live divided among several different neighbourhoods, and their youth either study, or work in indigenous organizations, security, healthcare, or receptionist positions. They have faced economic obstacles that prevent them from entering schools and, consequently, finding employment.

According to my material, the migratory process from reserve to city of the interviewed indigenous young people is very similar: before arriving in the state capital, Rio Branco, most had lived in smaller urban centres elsewhere in the state. The biggest motive for migration stated by those indigenous adolescents in my study who resided in Rio Branco was that they had accompanied their parents in migration. At the end of the 1980s, employment in indigenous organizations, urban jobs, and internal conflicts were responsible for much of the migration to the city. Internal conflicts, such as the assassination of a family member, had occurred due to the problems with leadership, jealousy, or land disputes. The second biggest motive for migration was study. Unlike the period from the 1950s to the 1970s, it is not only employment that is driving indigenous people to urban centres. At that time, indigenous men looked for jobs on construction sites, whilst women looked for work as domestic servants (e.g. Ferri 1990; Cardoso de Oliveira 1968; Spyer 1999). However, attempts to achieve better levels of education are still connected to economic and social motives. Today, education is perceived as a means of improving one's livelihood. Only educated Indians know how to seek benefits and negotiate with authorities. The temporary migration of indigenous young people to the city has also increased due to training courses, healthcare, negotiations with authorities,

temporary paid employment on farms close to urban areas, the procurement of benefits, such as a pensions, as well as the sale of agricultural produce and purchase of essential goods.

The major differences between youth in the city and the reserve were that in the city the youth were worried that they could not finish school and due to economic problems, unemployment, violence, and prejudice. Whereas the youth in the reserve, aside from concern about their studies, were worried about the security of their land, such as invasions of illegal loggers and traffickers, the availability of health services, and communication with the outer world. In the reserve, girls in particular said that the difficulty is that they cannot speak Portuguese fluently and thus cannot express what they think.

In studying the meaning of youth cultures for indigenous youth, my analysis can be divided into four different levels: the dialogue of indigenous young people with non-indigenous young people, dominant society, their own indigenous communities, and other indigenous young people. When looking at members of the same community, the focus is on the relation of the youth to their parents and elders. Last, I will discuss the relationship of indigenous youth to other indigenous youths, showing the indigenization of youth culture in Amazonia.

Relating to Non-indigenous Youth

Native youth act in different social situations, and have their own ways and styles of dress, bodily practices, and obedience to rules, while being at school, in communal meetings, and participating rituals of native community. I am particularly interested in their habitus in changing social situations in relation to youth cultures. In this task the local power relations are to be taken into account. As Pierre Bourdieu (1985:197) states, “The position of a given agent within the social space can thus be defined by the positions he occupies in the different fields, that is, in the distribution of the powers which are active within each of them.” When looking specifically at youth cultures, it is essential to analyze how thinking varies according to the social situation and context at hand.

Indigenous adolescents choose from available elements and representations which they feel comfortable reproducing. In the city, television, leisure activities, various ideologies, media

sources, clothing, music, and so forth carry different ideas and values that make young people feel more independent, therefore enabling them to construct their own opinions. Some acts and practices are typical of a particular age group, such as going to concerts, watching certain TV programmes, and listening to a certain type of music. These things represent for them a spatial distinction that can be understood in terms of power relations by demarcating some situations as areas of one's own activity (see Massey 1998). By power relations I do not refer only to the dominant society, but also to one's own indigenous community, as there may be distinctions between the values of young people and their parents and elders, as well as even to other indigenous groups.

Representations of youth cultures are especially seen in the educational sphere, where they are linked to studying and being a student. Students often use different clothing and language even at the indigenous schools of the reserves, which also turns these schools into distinct social spaces. Their neat 'city clothes', purchased in the nearby municipalities, could be the clothing of any adolescent in the area. Studying represents a relationship with the dominant society, as the school sets its own behavioural codes and supplies a different set of references (see Rival 2002). The schools in the reserves are one context for government politics, despite the fact that the villages try to construct multicultural education programs adapted to their own social realities. In general, it can be said that youth in urban areas are more involved with youth cultures than the young people in reserves.

Being personified as Indians, especially in urban spaces and by non-indigenous people, may make young Indian adolescents feel subject to strict personal rules and the expected possession and exhibition of distinct characteristics. When they want to avoid being identified as Indian, the most common representations collected are those of national and global youth cultures. In these situations location and ethnicity are not relevant, and, rather, adapting to youth cultures depends on the will to act and behave in certain ways. For the youth of the city, the inconvenience experienced is that if their Indian heritage is known, for instance any native linguistic shortcomings might lead others to believe that they are not 'real' Indians. Thus they sometimes prefer to enter into the social system of anonymity and 'hide' their 'Indianness.' This describes situations in which the young person does not want, in the words of Sara Ahmed (2000:71), to 'learn to be strange.' She has described narratives in which Australian aboriginal women speak of learning to become aboriginal. In Amazonia, in the public urban everyday social space, it may often become strategic to ignore indigenous representations in

order to avoid prejudice by non-indigenous in the cities. In the city, this is typical of those young Indians whose families have moved to Rio Branco as the result of internal conflicts in their villages and rarely have contacts with their lands of origin. Moreover, often one of their parents is White. Often, young Indians in urban centres, whether visiting or residing in the city, find it easier to represent youth cultures other than their own in order to avoid discrimination.

Through youth cultures indigenous young people may feel they have relatively strong ties with other adolescents – indigenous and non-indigenous alike. In the city, every time one leaves the house, one is seen by others and becomes the subject of their evaluations. It is the temporarily ritualistic time of leaving that allows the shift from a space of identification on the basis of personal relationships to the joining of anonymous groups of individuals in society. Various positions that are normally marked and the internal rules of domination can be temporarily abolished. Youth cultures offer social fields of anonymous actors in collective groups that meet in public squares, where communication is possible, desired or even obligatory (see DaMatta 1991a[1979], 1991b). In these areas, indigenous youths may adapt to behavioural codes that help bypass social spheres of indigeness or other age groups. When the indigenous adolescents of the reserve walk in the city, they may try to achieve this anonymity during their visits, albeit only temporarily.

Mastering the Knowledge of the Dominant Society

Youth in urban areas and in the reserves differ from each other, but one characteristic is common to both young Indians in the city and the reserve: they are very much concerned with their education and studies. Overall, young people learn many new practices at schools and in cities, such as how to navigate in urban areas, or dealing with non-indigenous individuals. Indigenous youths in the city also frequently use the Internet to discuss with their non-indigenous and indigenous friends. In recent years girls have also increasingly visited cyber cafés with their friends. However, youth coming from the reserves rarely speak Portuguese well, and thus, membership in the dominant society can be expressed in other ways: by certain objects, personal items, and clothing, or going to *forrós* (popular dances) in the city. Following the interpretation of Aparecida Vilaça (2007) that the Wari Indians have two

bodies: a White body and the Wari body, both of which are transformed through clothing and different habits, indigenous youths likewise produce a certain type of White body: one that is typical of global youth cultures. Vilaça has argued that through a White body the Wari show that they have experienced and mastered the other's point of the view. Christine Lasmar (2005) has also suggested that indigenous people in their visible bodies are continuously turning more into White or Indian. She has worked on Indian females in the cities in the Upper Negro River, and shows how Indianness is a constructed category. Thus, representing youth cultures is not about excluding other cultures or traditions, but mastering the knowledge of the dominant society. Even if in the reserves the predominant non-indigenous music is *forró* or *sertanejo*, listening to this music does not indicate a decrease in indigenous identity. Thus, representing youth cultures is not about excluding other cultures and traditions. Youth cultures are constructed temporarily, as they are one of the layers representing those values and norms that have been mastered and learnt.

While I was in one of the Manchineri villages, I saw pictures of singers Madonna and Michael Jackson on the cover of a young man's wallet, which prompted me to ask who they were. The answer was simply 'People from the city.' It is interesting that the man, who lived in the only Evangelical village of the reserve, did not simply say that they were White. Thus, when the Manchineri say that someone is from the city, it means that this person is from another world, but one they are conscious of and interested in understanding. For at least some of those in the reserves, the task is to create a balanced relationship with the usually unknown and invisible urban space, because the cities and their practices and knowledge are needed in order to assure well-being, for instance in terms of health and education projects (see Virtanen forthcoming). The increasing relations between urban and rural areas have also brought about this change, as indigenous people have to think about and articulate more precisely who they are or are not. Overall, it is usually young people who are intermediaries between urban and rural areas (see Virtanen 2007a; forthcoming). Suzanne Oakdale (2004) discussed in her article how a young spokesperson of the Kayapis based his position on his mastery of the non-indigenous ways, which differ from an old Kayapi spokesperson's ways, of showing leadership. When looking at indigenous youths, it is seen that they produce certain embodied differentiations that only their social age group are able to produce.

Some social problems also appear to be due to difficulties in finding one's place in the world, such as alcoholism. On the other hand, heavy consumption of alcohol is also linked with

learning non-indigenous ways (Calavia Sáez 2004), but it may turn into a real problem when indigenous young people reside in city neighbourhoods, where the use of drugs and alcohol is a social problem. In Acre, one of the indigenous leaders told me that what is best for the youth is to have an objective when staying in the city and generally to consider what kind of knowledge is important for the community. In general, certain practices and types of knowledge that only young Indians can master widen the gap between generations in indigenous communities.

Youth Cultures and the Generational Question

Today's indigenous youth are living a very different historical, political, and cultural period from their parents and grandparents. On one hand, the indigenous population has gained a louder voice and enjoy the benefits to which they are entitled, but, on the other, they still have to fight for the full realization of their citizenship, especially security, education, and healthcare (Ramos 2003). Overall, the advantage for young people, especially young men, is that they have important interethnic skills, such as knowledge about non-Indian practices, literacy, and bilingualism. Therefore, they have taken a leadership role in many indigenous communities, their ethnic associations, or in indigenous movements and politics (e.g. Brown 1993:311-312; Oakdale 2004:65). For instance, young men living in the reserve have more knowledge of urban practices due to their more frequent visits to other municipalities to help older relatives, especially to collect their pensions, buy goods, and sell agricultural produce. They also accompany the visits of governmental officials and nongovernmental organization representatives, as they know how to act as interpreters and how to transmit new information to other community members (see Graham 2002). They may also have certain non-indigenous clothes and hairstyles that in some sense make them to appear more familiar to non-indigenous individuals. As they have knowledge of non-indigenous and indigenous ways of doing things, they are better accustomed to acting in various social situations.

Generational conflicts are an issue mentioned often both by youth and elders in Amazonia. When I discussed with a 16-year-old Manchineri girl living in the city, she said that she was living at her cousin's place, because she had had an argument with her mother over her new haircut. The mother had said that in the reserve all girls have long hair. Many other young

people in the city said that their parents had not let them go out when they wanted. The other issues that the youth in Acre mentioned were related to their non-indigenous clothing or housework. In the reserve, the generational conflicts are less common than in the city, probably due to the lesser influence of other cultures and ideas. In the reserve, the word that appeared the most in the answers given by the Manchineri adolescents about a good life was ‘respect’, to older generations especially, along with other closely associated themes, such as harmony, responsibility, hospitality, trust, and obeying parents. In Rio Branco, respect for parents as such was not so important, but Manchineri youngsters thought that no amount of economic resources could ensure a good life; instead, they valued immaterial things, such as family life, proximity, and caring for others. However, many elders worry that the younger generation will not keep traditions alive, and that non-indigenous practices replace communities’ own ways of doing things. Language also separates young people from their elders, since even in the city some elders speak only the indigenous language. Some youths in the city cannot speak the indigenous language at all, deepening the gap between young people and the elders of the community. It must be mentioned that for many Indians in the city, the difficulty lies in producing relatedness to the members of their own ethnic group, but also in defining their presence in the city. However, representing youth cultures does not necessarily decrease indigenous identity or the meaning of cultural traditions in the lives of young Indians. For indigenous young people, their cultural traditions are connected to certain times, places, and persons that offer them a tower of strength that the other youth do not possess. A Cashinahua young man living in the city said:

I’ve been here since 2002. I speak the same language, I sing. I haven’t changed in any way! I’m still an Indian. I have the material to paint, my shamanic things, and food. The question is presenting it [to the others], isn’t it? [...]

When young Indians make corporeal distinctions through indigenous traditions, this is intimately related to the construction of personhood. For many Amazonian indigenous young people today, wherever they live, ‘tradition’ offers answers to their existential questions and helps in planning for the future. Indigenous traditions are linked to certain practices that constitute their own liminal spaces and phases, allowing them to reorganize and transform current social situations. For both the young Indians in the reserve and the city, shamanistic ceremonies and puberty rituals are related to their personal development in their own distinct way (Virtanen 2006; 2007a). One young Manchineri woman living in the city said that she had asked the old Manchineri women visiting the city to paint her body in order to mark her transition to adulthood. She said the painting had made her spirit more alive. The following

day the girl went to school all painted and she had to explain to her classmates that she is Indian and in their village people do this. For her, body painting was an expression of the social world of which she was member. Moreover, the history of the group and ideas of different forest spirits are materialized in the young people's indigenous traditions. For instance, the indigenous youth in the city said that they liked to be in the forest and listen to the sounds of animals. It makes them feel different from non-indigenous youths.

It can also be said that due to education and participation in state schooling, the period of adolescence is longer. In most of the villages in the reserves, becoming an adult is still marked by an initiation ritual or ritualistic activities, and in the reserve there are still cases of early matrimony, but youth learn new responsibilities even after parenthood, which protracts the shift to a new social phase, contrary to the previous generations.

Amazonian Indigenous Youth Cultures?

Young people as such may be a reference group, even though indigenous youth carry their own ethnic differences. Indigenous youth have brought new elements to the social space of youth culture that, until today, has lacked indigenous contributions in Amazonia. Another characteristic trait of indigenous young people is the crossing of cultural and social borders. For instance, in one indigenous cultural event, I saw indigenous young people mixing traditional body painting designs with totally new ones, such as hearts or even the flags of football teams. Although the traditional means of representation – decorating one's body through painting that relates to indigenous value systems, they lived their traditions through those things that played part in their everyday lives, such as football teams and other iconography used in their peer group.

However, in Amazonia it is still very rare for indigenous youth cultures to exist as subcultures to 'mainstream' youth cultures or as their parallel cultures. Elsewhere, for instance, rock and rap music have been produced in the indigenous language, such as Maori, and recently in the Same language in Finland. In New Zealand since the 1980s, Maori adolescents have improved their self-esteem through breakdance, hip-hop, and rap music. According to Tony Mitchell (2001), they indigenized rap and hip-hop by singing in the Maori language about

their beliefs, as well as about the political and social problems the Maori face. However, first the Maori youths said that they used black American symbols instead of Maori symbols to compensate for their lack of indigenous knowledge. Moreover, if they wore Maori symbols, others would think that they had no respect for their own culture. Later, the Maori language was used without English translations and new hybrid musical expressions were created. In contrast, among Amazonian Indian youths, the representations of black American cultures are very rare, despite the frequency with which they are found among youths globally. In both urban and reserve contexts in Amazonia, there are connotations linked to regional and national cultures, such as *farró* and *sertanejo* musical cultures, or *rock* music especially in the city. For instance some young people in the city were fans of Charlie Brown Jr., a Brazilian pop rock group related to skateboarding culture. Nevertheless, in recent years indigenous traditions have produced symbolic capital that non-indigenous youths could not have produced.

For indigenous young people living in the city, adaptation to a new dwelling place that is totally different from their home may be a life-changing experience, and integration depends on a series of familiar, personal, and contextual factors. As elsewhere in the world, in Amazonia there seems to be a close relationship between migrant youths and the creation of marginal cultural phenomena. Marina Ariza (2005) has argued that for young people migrating to urban areas in Mexico, whether visiting or residing there temporarily or permanently, it is common to find a new track in life and assume different styles. For instance, some young migrants have been linked to subcultures in urban areas, such as rap music. In the Amazon region, it can be noticed that many indigenous youths emphasize their ethnic identity in urban areas in new ways. For instance, new artistic expressions are created or active involvement in ethnopolitical movements is begun.

Some indigenous young people residing in the city in Acre participate in indigenous student movements and the meetings of indigenous youth that have increased in recent years (Virtanen 2007a). They have started to claim spaces to hold meetings and discuss their problems, and are actively involved in the movement of indigenous students, MEIACSAM, the Movement of Indigenous Students of Acre and Southern Amazonas (*Movimento dos Estudantes Indígenas do Acre e Sul do Amazonas*). The Movement of Indigenous Students has called for financial support, housing and more spaces for indigenous students in secondary schools. Its representatives have participated in regional and national Youth

Forums that have strengthened the identity of indigenous young people as youth who have their own special concerns and demands. In the Second Youth Forum in Rio Branco, in September 2005, a Cashinahua young man introduced the cultural presentation of indigenous students, who were attending the forum for the first time:

My name is Linoa. I'm from the Cashinahua people. I'm proud to be Indian in any place. He [pointing a young Manchineri man] will sing to you. Every word, every song [he will sing] has a meaning for us. We have differences that only we can understand. We are students. We are organizing a movement of indigenous students, starting from here, Rio Branco. The objective of our movement and this Youth Forum is to integrate Indian youths into non-indigenous society. Since we are still somewhat marginalized. I thank you for this opportunity, and also the Government for supporting us. Our people in the jungle are still suffering. But we, who are a part of them, are also contributing.

Indigenous youth can show their identity as indigenous young people more openly within a network of people who value and respect their traditional knowledge. In Acre these are people who can be said to belong to a group called 'Povos da Floresta' (People of the Forest), which includes some environmentalists, NGO workers, governmental officers, and those interested in indigenous traditions, such as shamanism. In Acre some indigenous youths have been invited to birthday parties and the private homes of these people, many of whom had travelled a lot, and thus were able to introduce the youth to new global influences – possibility that many other non-indigenous youth may not have. In general, in Brazil image about indigenous people is changing, since popular stereotypes of Indians as 'lazy' or 'treacherous' or even as 'vagrants' are increasingly considered romantic, and there is an increasing respect for indigenous populations in response to their cultural knowledge and ecological conservationism (Ramos 2003). A few 'interethnically skilled' indigenous young people have also made contacts with non-indigenous DJs, filmmakers, and clothing and fabric designers, and are interested in reproducing their own cultural traditions in new ways. Although these products are found in non-indigenous markets, some community members also consume these new products and are proud of sharing their dynamic traditions. Thus, it is also about constructing new types of sociality.

However, most of the youth do distinguish themselves from non-indigenous youths, even if they would represent youth cultures in their clothing and styles. In general young Indians usually prefer to stay in the company of their kin or other indigenous people. When I met with youth in their free time, they were often with their kin - sisters, brothers, or cousins. Those young people for whom indigenous traditions had little meaning and who had had no contact

with their ethnic community for a long time were usually in the company of non-indigenous friends.

Experience of Youth Cultures in Amazonia

This article has shown that youth cultures have different meanings for different indigenous young people in different situations. The article has explained some reasons why representations of global youth cultures are sometimes employed. Through youth cultures the indigenous youth are creating something of their own and distinguishing themselves from their own ethnic community, dominant culture, or both. In particular, in the Amazon region participation in youth cultures appears to be related to being a member of the dominant society and to being knowledgeable about its manners and codes. Furthermore, my study shows that by participating in youth cultures, indigenous youths show that they, like other young people, aim to master knowledge that will allow them to cope in the global world, secure a better education, and gain access to satisfactory health services. In some social spaces the indigenous youth desire to decrease ethnic, social, and cultural differences between all youths and thus want to be active agents in social spaces where dominant society youth also act. Furthermore, producing and participating in global youth cultures especially occurs when cultural traditions are no longer reproduced in the community and social environment of the youth. In this case, youth cultures are no longer an attempt to master the embodied knowledge and power of the non-indigenous people.

Young people often question the typical spaces designated as indigenous or non-indigenous, and they seem to say that they can be indigenous anywhere, even if this is not shown in their physical bodies, speech, or behaviour; they say that they have the right to adopt any lifestyle or cultural value. Indigenous youths circulate through various social settings, from school, where they dress in jeans, to traditional ceremonies, in which a very different logic and epistemic system is applied. They have often been viewed as people who fail to fit the traditional image of Indians. Sometimes indigenous youths integrate into the youth population of the national society, while at other times they prefer to maintain their distinctiveness from the dominant society. Indigenous young people have increased their social mobility; in particular, taking part in youth cultures offers bridges to act with people across class, race,

gender, and ethnic divides. Youth cultures offer a space for new conduct, manners and the crossing of cultural and social borders. Young people's construction of bodies is a continuous activity, and youth cultures provide them with one more layer that they can apply. Youth cultures produce new coalitions and relationships of trust with some other social groups.

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Notes

1) Earlier version of the article 'Culturas Jovens Globais e Adolescência entre os Povos Indígenas da Amazônia' will be published in *Práticas e perspectivas da juventude contemporânea*, edited by Luís Antonio Groppo, Michel Zaidan Filho, Otávio Luiz Machado and Janice Tirelli Ponte de Souza. Recife: Universitária UFPE (forthcoming in 2009).

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3) Especially in 1991 newspapers reported a series of suicides involving more than 100 Guarani aged from 13 to 17 living in their reserve. According to the Guarani themselves, they have suffered from too many people inhabiting too small land, the impact of the nearest urban centre, and a number of different religious movements.

4) According to the survey by the Group of Indigenous Women from the Union of Indigenous Nations of Acre and Southern Amazonas (GMI-UNI), the biggest groups were Apurinã (599 people), Cashinahua (365) and Manchineri (128). It should be noted that figures for these groups included all those who stated that either one of their parents was Indian.

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