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This study investigates the female adolescent perspective in consumer socialization and the role of peer group pressure by using fashion and brands as a context. More specifically, this research explores group socialization in female adolescent’s small friendship groups by using fashion clothing and brands as the product category. The focus is on how adolescent girls are socialized into being consumers – i.e. form attitudes and judgments regarding fashion clothing, make sense of the marketplace and how shopping fits in their social lives, make their respective consumption decisions. The aim is to provide the female adolescent perspective in consumer socialization while simultaneously taking into account fashion as a context.

FRIENDSHIP, GENDER AND PEER GROUP INFLUENCE

Although adolescents as consumers (e.g. Lachance, Beadouin, and Robitaille 2003) and their socialization into being consumers have been widely studied (Roedder John 1999), socialization in friendship groups has received very little attention. Consumer socialization, the process by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace (Ward 1974), has generated many studies and advancement in this subject has been well-summarized by Roedder John (1999). However, consumer socialization in close friendship groups among female teenagers has received very little attention. Furthermore, little emphasis has been directed toward the issue of gender differences in consumer socialization, resulting in a lack of conceptualization on what differences might be (Roedder John 1999). In addition, female adolescents are found to have very intimate relationships within their small friendship groups (Repinski and Zook 2005), and it is important to investigate what effects this closeness has on their consumption decisions. “There is a cultural assumption that men’s and women’s friendships are different” (Allan 1989, p.67) and it has been shown that boys tend to have rather larger friendship networks than girls, but that girls tend to be emotionally closer with their smaller number of friends than are boys (Allan 1989; Dickens and Perlman 1981; Hess 1972; Maccoby and Jacklin 1974) and to have more intimate levels of self-disclosure (Davis and Franzoi 1986). Since findings point toward relationships at very intimate levels, it is important to investigate what effects this closeness has on their information search, attitude formation, and consumption decisions regarding fashion clothing. In order to mend the above mentioned gaps, this study explores, through the lens of group socialization theory (Harris 1995), the female adolescent perspective in consumer socialization and the role peer group pressure by using fashion and brands as a context; and the effects of a close friendship group on the formation of attitudes toward fashion, brands, consumption, and the marketplace.
SOCIALIZATION AND CONSUMPTION

Socialization in consumer behaviour is defined as the process by which young people acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to their functioning as consumers in the marketplace (Ward 1974); and parents, peers, and mass media are cited as the main socialization agents. It is assumed that an important method of socialization in all societies is the imitation of the parent by the child and that young people imitate their older siblings, non-family adults and children, and characters they see on television (Harris 1995). The findings in most adolescent socialization studies in consumer research conclude that children start the socialization process within the home, that parents are followed by peers, and that peer influence is most significant during adolescence (Moschis and Moore, 1979). However, Harris’ (1995) work in child development suggested that parents do not have any long-term effects on the development of their child’s personality. Harris proposes a new theory of development, in which socialization is context-specific and outside-the-home socialization takes place in the peer groups of childhood and adolescence. It has been demonstrated that people use other’s product evaluations as a source of information about products (Burnkrant and Cousineau 1975), and peers as a source of information appear to be important in buying decisions concerning items important for peer acceptance (Moschis and Moore 1979).

GROUP SOCIALIZATION THEORY

A new approach in the socialization literature, Group Socialization Theory (GST), proposes that intra- and inter-group processes, not dyadic relationships, are responsible for the transmission of culture and for environmental modification of children’s personality characteristics (Harris 1995). According to GST, outside-the-home socialization in urbanized societies takes place in the peer groups: the sex-segregated groups of middle childhood and the cliques or crowds of adolescence.

Peer groups are composed of individuals who categorize themselves in the same way and they fit (Turner et al. 1987)’s definition of a psychological group: “A psychological group is defined as one that is psychologically significant for the members, to which they relate themselves subjectively for social comparison and the acquisition of norms and values...from which they take their rules, standards, and beliefs about appropriate conduct and attitudes...and which influences their attitudes and behavior”. Studying contexts of socialization, Gecas (1981) concludes “there is a ‘membership’ component to a sociological conception of socialization. To be socialized is to belong ... identification with the socializer or the socializing group makes one more receptive to their influence and motivated to be socialized in accordance with their standards”. Therefore, membership in a group and the process of socialization are intertwined. When individuals categorize themselves as members of a particular group, they identify with that group and take on its rules, standards, and beliefs about appropriate conduct and attitudes (Turner et al. 1987) and this is seen as the source for within-group assimilation. It seems clear that teenage girls close friendship groups are groups in the sense Turner described, therefore, studying them from a consumer socialization perspective in order to find out whether peers are the main socialization agents and whether they exert the highest influence on adolescents’ marketplace behaviour is worthwhile by investigating the effects of a close friendship group (CFG) on adolescent girls’ consumption of fashion clothing.

Many studies have documented that adolescents are very susceptible to peer group influence (Lachance, Beadouin, and Robitalle 2003; Smucker and Creekmore
1972) and that opinions of reference groups and word-of-mouth from friends influence consumers’ evaluations of products (Bearden and Etzel 1982). The most important agent in developing brand sensitivity in apparel appears to be the influence of peers, confirming the importance of friends and pals during adolescence, and the role that clothes seem to play in relationship with them (Lachance, Beadouin, and Robitalle 2003). Therefore, susceptibility of adolescents to peer group influence is expected to play a role in the attitude formation toward fashion brands and consumption. Furthermore, people tend to act in accordance with a frame of reference produced by the groups to which they belong (Merton and Rossi 1949; Turner et al. 1987). Moreover being accepted by their peers and being liked is the main concern in adolescent girl’s consumption behaviour (Rose, Boush, and Friestad 1998; Rosenberg and Simmons 1975), which is expected to increase the level of susceptibility to peer group influence for female adolescents. In addition, the literature on fashion consumption of females suggest that females are more self-conscious (Gould and Stern 1989), more fashion-conscious, (Wan, Youn, and Fang 2001) and that they are more involved with fashion than men (O’Cass 2004), which is likely to attenuate the effect of one’s close friendship group on fashion consumption. Therefore, the effects of a CFG on the formation of their attitudes toward fashion, brands, consumption and marketplace behavior is of interest.

**FRIENDSHIP GROUPS’ PROPERTIES**

Teenage girls friendship groups can be conceptualized as cross-products between a ‘small brand/consumption community’, a ‘reference group’ and a ‘neo-tribe’ in the sense that they have shared emotions and interactions among individuals (Cova and Cova 2002) but they also have a shared background of trends, communities, and lifestyles and have normative influences of the group or of the individual group members on one another. Even though the instability and fluidity found in neo-tribes (Maffesoli 1996) is expected to be at low levels in such close friendship groups, strong ties and symbolically and ritually manifested commitment of their members are expected to be present. However, “tribes exist in no other form but symbolically and ritually manifested commitment of their members” (Cova and Cova 2002), and this clearly is not the whole picture of female adolescents’ friendship groups. Moreover, a tribe is defined as a network of heterogeneous persons (in terms of age, sex, income, etc) who are linked by a shared passion or emotion (ibid) whereas female adolescents’ friendship groups are homogeneous. In as much as these friendship groups may be admirers of a brand, their existence is limited to any ‘brand’ and they are not geographically dispersed. Therefore, such friendship groups are not exactly ‘brand communities’ (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001).

On the other hand, the reference group concept “recognizes that people frequently orient themselves to other than membership groups in shaping their behavior and evaluations and that reference groups can perform a diversity of functions” (Merton and Rossi 1949), which seems to be aligned with female adolescent friendship group dynamics. On the whole, even though female adolescents’ close friendship groups share some fundamental properties of both neo-tribes and brand communities, they also act as reference groups.

The level of analyses in this study is both individual and micro-social (Desjeux 1996). The micro-social level of analysis is one of interaction between people, whether face to face or in large gatherings According to Cova and Cova (2002), the Latin approach makes an epistemological choice to look at consumption at the micro-social level “particularly as found in groups of consumers and manifested through group action”. Although this piece of intended research does not commit to the Latin
approach *per se*, the use of micro-social level of analysis along with individual level information seems reasonable in order to tap the dynamics of friendship groups.

Taking into account the above literature, this study aims to explore, through the lens of group socialization theory (Harris 1995), the female adolescent perspective in consumer socialization and the role of peer group pressure; and the effects of a CFG on the formation of female adolescents’ attitudes toward fashion, brands, consumption, and the marketplace.

**METHODOLOGY**

Eight focus groups were carried out with respondents who were recruited from various high schools in the urban centres of UK. The respondents’ ages varied from 14 to 16. The focus groups were audio-taped and the transcripts were analyzed for interpretive themes, relationships with the literature, theory, and assumptions using pattern-coding methods (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The first two focus groups were used in order to fine-tune and update the topic guide for the focus groups, and to identify new key themes that needed to be addressed within the research framework.

**FINDINGS**

Four emergent themes were identified after analysing the transcriptions from the focus group discussions. Two of the themes pertain to consumer socialization, namely ‘group consumer socialization theory’ and ‘collective style identity’. Two of the themes emerged as the extension of pre-established literature, namely ‘antithetic symbolic consumption’ and ‘social uses of fashion information and consumption’.

**Group Consumer Socialization Theory**

The excerpts below indicate that consumer socialization in small friendship groups follow Group Socialization Theory, and, therefore provide confirming evidence that appropriate marketplace behaviour and culture are transmitted through peer-groups rather than parents. Close friends are the social influence rather than parents regarding fashion clothing, consumption, and one’s social space. Girls share information with each other that they would not share with their mothers or fathers and are not influenced by their mothers’ styles per se. Therefore, group socialization theory (Harris 1995) is at work in female adolescents’ small friendship groups, especially regarding how they are socialized into being consumers:

E: If I were gonna shop and my mum is there... If I’m going shopping... She could tell me what she likes... her style is really different from mine... She’s really into Trinny & Susannah and things like that... I know that they (parents) know what my style is... If I know that they like it, then that’s better... I’d probably go for the opposite, the one that she didn’t like... just so to be the little devil... just so that she knows I... I’m not gonna take advice from her... on what to wear...

G: to be different...

L: Nooo! I hate it when people do that... Like when we’re in this shop they up call their moms saying can I buy this...

A: But if it’s really expensive then sometimes... I value mum’s opinion.... L: Or their mums say they don’t like it and they take it back...My mum... I don’t care what she thinks...If it’s cool it’s cool...

The reference made by A to price is consistent with the finding that with the exception of price, parental influence is not dominant (Khan and Khan 2005).

G: Magazines, internet... and you just sort of see it (fashion) around...

E: like pop videos... G: we’re walking around so much in town... when you’re walking around in town you see people wearing lots of different stuff...
you see these shoes on someone... and you like it then you might go out and buy it...

E: I do read sugar like from time to time because i like to look at the fashions and Elle girl I like...

G: yea... I don’t specifically go and look for it (on the Internet) but if it’s there in the magazines...then I’ll have a look through it...

E: i only really use the internet to look at shops... For fashion I look at shops and things... not really ... not really on net...but if it’s on a magazine and they’re on the red carpet then I’ll look at it...

G: I’m not a big fan of French Connection, it’s mainly because of the way they do their clothing...

E:I’m not quite into really cheap tacky kind of shops... I like certain things from new look new look but not the things that have things like ‘new look’ written all over them...no... i don’t really like it... cause I think they’re cheesy...

G: The ones that have like slogans on them.....say... Like when the crazy frog came out they had the tops from the crazy frog and i personally wouldn’t go and buy one of them...

E: Yes.. yes... and things like little slogans...

G: Things over the top and things...

Even though girls see fashion in shops, on other people, in magazines, and to a lesser extent on the Internet, they interpret and filter the appropriate parts of the given season’s fashion through discussion mechanisms in their close friendship group.

Durham (1999), in trying to broaden our understanding the role of mass media in girls’ socialization and their negotiations of sexuality, has paid attention to context following Harris’ (1995) theory. The conclusions from Durham’s (1999) study suggest that the peer group is of crucial significance, and that interventions such as media literacy efforts about the norms of sexuality cannot be effective unless they are sensitive to peer group functioning around issues of race, class, and culture. Adapting the argument to consumer socialization, it can be argued that the above excerpts provide evidence that top-down (anti)advertising messages, images from the media and/or messages from parents will not work unless they take into account the significance of the peer group. In addition, the above excerpts indicate that girls are not as uniformly vulnerable to media messages concerning brands and female fashion tastes, which is in disagreement with the prevalent ideas that mass media imposes brands and styles (e.g. Martin and Kennedy 1993) and in agreement with the previous findings that the material value system seems to arise out of basic socialization processes, not through the desires that mass media are said to create (Moore and Moschis 1978). Taken together, the excerpts provide convergent evidence to the argument that peer groups will be the most influential consumer socialization agents for female adolescents, providing appropriate codes of conduct, marketplace behaviour, and culture.

Collective Style Identity

According to Tajfel (1981), social identity refers to “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that group membership” (p.255). Within-group assimilation and between-group contrast is quite high in close friendship groups regarding purchase decisions (which brand to buy). Clearly, when individuals categorize themselves as members of a particular group, they identify with that group and take on its ‘rules, standards, and beliefs about appropriate conduct and attitudes’ (Turner et al. 1987) and this is seen as the source for within-group assimilation. The girls seem to agree on which brands are worth buying and which ones are no-no brands and they individually take on the rules, standards, and beliefs about appropriate conduct and attitudes, and are assimilated within the group. Therefore, the excerpts below
provide insights into how the girls’ form attitudes towards brands, fashion, and consumption.

G: Topshop, HM, sometimes New Look cause there’s nice things in there...River Island, House of Fraser, Selfridges!
E: Topshop is really good... They have lots of outrageous things in there
G: Like Warehouse, Morgan and Elle....

S: Oh Miss Sixty...The shop on Bond Street is really good...
F: Topshop’s good...
Sh3: Firetrap...
L: I’m in for Ted Baker at the moment... They’ve got some reaaally nice stuff...
A: Warehouse...
S: Yeah...
S: I could buy many things from Topshop...
Sh3: Yeah Topshop...

F: Those in the H&M are just the same as Bank....
A: I looove H&M... They have all the same stuff as in Topshop and for cheaper...
S: And if you just want it for a season...
A: Exactly...like i do it with tank tops...
Sh3: Yeah...
L: You only wear it like… for a short time...
A: Like those little… for 3.99

D: Ted Baker jumper, Topshop
T: Topshop, New Look, River Island
Cs:River island…
K: Pineapple…
Sl:One brand I do like is called Prank

Nk: French Connection, Gucci…
Ssh: French Connection, Armani, Adidas, Missy Elliott stuff…
Am: Diesel, French Connection…
Rb: Diesel, French Connection…
Kr: Armani, French Connection, Diesel, Pumas, Adidas and sports brands

The excerpts are in line with Mead’s (1934) suggestion that the self emerges through the internalization of the norms, rules, and standards of the group. Furthermore, Piacentini and Mailer’s (2004) study suggests that clothing choices of young people are closely bound to their self-concept, and are used as a way of self-expression and as a way of judging the people and situations they face, and the above excerpts suggest that indeed this is the case, but in relation to one’s own group in a way described by Mead (1934).

In addition, Bearden and Etzel’s (1982) concept of susceptibility to reference group influence seems to be an important factor that contributes to the solidification of social identity since the brand names given by a particular group’s members tend to be the same. Even the more rebellious member of the group (who will ‘wear her Converse just to be different’) cites the same brand names with her other group members. Therefore, there appears to be both conformity and small contrasts in the group in terms of style, but the brand names stay the same regardless. The excerpts below are the most indicative of what can be called ‘the conformity of small contrasts’ in the sense that close friendship groups have a shared code and within the group they try and add individual touches to their styles. They know each other’s unique touches very well:

E: I’d wear jeans that are ripped and like a t-shirt and Converse... I like Converse....I wouldn’t really bother so much...It depends who I’m meeting but I wouldn’t bother so much....

G: I still wear something like ripped jeans so I’d wear them... but with pointy shoes or boots or something or with a fitted v-neck jumper or something... the trousers may be the same but something that we’ll wear that’ll say like... I won’t wear Converse...

E: Sometimes I would like ask what the others are wearing ... But not all the time...because I won’t feel comfortable in it... I mean if I was gonna be the odd one out, like at a party...I’d wear the style they’re wearing....
G: You know not like totally different....There’s some stuff like flow tops and jeans that we all wear... but (for E) it will always be topped up with Converse...

E: I find it really nice what they’re wearing but I’ll wear my converses...just to say that I’m Converse... I’m different...

A: We’re normal, preppie... Preppie but sexy...
L: I think we’re all preppie...But we’re all very unique…

L:  I’m trendy and casual…
R: Vintage, casual but trendy…
Sc: Trendy…

It seems that female adolescents exhibit both a need to be independent and a sensitivity to be accepted, liked, and validated by their peers in order to derive positive outcomes of social comparison, to gain reflected appraisal, and to reduce unpleasant emotions such as frustration, manifested in a way similar to the ‘independent’ vs. ‘interdependent’ people in Markus and Kitayama (1991). Furthermore, the teenagers exhibit a desire to enhance their own self-image by association with a reference group in a way that is similar to value expressive interpersonal influence (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Park and Lessig 1977).

Antithetic Symbolic Consumption
Symbolic consumption of clothing by adolescents has been well-documented (Elliott and Davies 2005; Piacentini and Mailer 2004). The adolescents in this study especially stay away from brands that they have observed as being used by a group of people they do not identify with, which is in line with Banister and Hogg’s (2004) finding that the consumption activities of the majority of consumers were informed by the motivation to avoid consuming (or being identified with) negative images. Therefore, the girls are aligning their own choices with the groups’ choice to particularly avoid consuming brands and images they perceive to be negative, which provides confirmatory evidence that adolescents are very susceptible to peer group influence especially regarding clothing items (Lachance, Beadouin, and Robitaille 2003; Smucker and Creekmore 1972) when forming their opinions and attitudes about fashion and brands, and helps answer the second research question posed above. For example, the subculture that was referred to as ‘chavs’ in 4 of the 5 focus groups are disliked by all the girls and they do not purchase brands like Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Burberry and Lacoste so as to distance themselves from this group of people. Moreover, when the friends brand them as ‘chavs’ for fun, they immediately object as they do not want to be identified with that group, even hypothetically.

L: A is a chav...
A: I’m not a chav... I don’t wear Adidas.........
L: Ok ok...
A: Chav’s a person that tucks their Adidas track bottoms into their socks...

When asked about brands they will never wear, all of the participants said Nike, Reebok, Adidas, and anything that is ‘chavvy’.
A: Nike, Reebok, chavs... Adidas...
L: All the sports ones…
A: The thing is that...There are people in this course that wear them...
F: Yea...
A: If you’re doing sports and you wear them, that’s ok....
S: It’s not like the fashion is oh yea like Gucci or something...
F: The fashion is whatever you want it to be so you can make your own fashion...
A: Chavs, like Adidas is their fashion...
Sh3: It’s their fashion...
A: Oh god... they’re not even athletic people...
F: They get all the new things... New trainers...
L: Or Burberry caps....
A: Burberry is like a real good made... but now... the chavs...
L: I have a Burberry handbag and the thing is you can’t wear them because they’ve been labelled with the chavs…
S: I think it’s just because stuff become more common… that’s why everybody adopts it and chavs start wearing it...

E: Council people that wear track suit bottoms the whole time...
G: Adidas and Nike…we wouldn’t touch it… we wouldn’t wear anything like that…
I mean you wear it if you’re doing sports or anything… ok… but if you’re going around the town in Nike… Or like with a top with the logo of Lacoste on it… It’s just certain things that townies and chavs have and you can’t wear them…
E: Anyone that has a Burberry handbag is very chavish… what they wear it with as well, they wear it with Nike trainers… so Victoria Beckham…There’s labels that if chavs wear them, then if you’re not a chav…
then why would you wear them??...

Social Uses of Fashion Information and Consumption

Fashion emerges as a means of socializing among female small friendship groups. The below excerpts suggest that female adolescents get together and socialize under the banner of going shopping, and this is very similar to the phatic role that discussion of advertising plays in the social life of teenagers (Ritson and Elliott 1999):

G: We go shopping like every Saturday!!!!
E: It’s a way of socializing really…

L, A: We socialize…
F: Starbucks we all go…. And in town… shopping… is like a routine…
L: BIGGG past-time activity…
A: We just end up doing it…
S: Yeah… if nothing, you go window shopping…

Sh: We go shopping every Saturday…
C: Yess yes…Quite a lot…
L: As a way to socialize…

Sh2: Shopping… yes!!!
N: Yes… A lot… Definitely…
J: Socializing… So It’s more than shopping…
Sa: Go from shop to shop… Trying things on.. Like this leopard print. Made me look like a hooker… Like this grandma dress. This long brown dress that’s really flowy and unflattering…For the fun of it…

As seen from the above quotes which are selected from four different focus groups, fashion acts as a means to socialize. For example, the female adolescents call each other up in order to arrange a shopping get-together and end up talking about important issues in their lives, fashion, and important issues at home. Therefore, fashion is a facilitator in the process of socializing and rather than working the conventional way, the socializing process here works opposite: fashion and brands and organizing shopping excursions serve as an excuse to call up one’s friend or to get together in town.

Moreover, data shows that they talk about their lives and what’s happening in their lives at the time while they are looking at clothes:

G: We talk about everything…
E: Yes we do talk about lots of stuff…We only really talk about clothes if we’re actually looking at the clothes… Saying what’d you think about that?? Or we’d…. We don’t really talk about so and so’s new look, it’s really nice like that…
G: We mainly say stuff related to what’s happening in our lives… Like who’s going out with who…or what’s happening at home… Things like that…

In addition, throughout all the eight focus groups, fashion acts as a ‘currency’ in the sense that the more one can talk about fashion, styles, shops, and brandnames, the more one can engage in the conversation.
DISCUSSION

A qualitative study explored, through the lens of group socialization theory (Harris 1995), the female adolescent perspective in consumer socialization and the role of peer group pressure by using fashion and brands as a context. Adolescents showed that consumer socialization as manifested by marketplace behavior, attitudes, and culture takes place in the close friendship groups, rather than at home or through the media, for female adolescents. There is strong evidence that group consumer socialization is created by the interplay of susceptibility to reference group influence, need to validate oneself, and the need to establish one’s individuality all within the context of a close-knit group.

Group Consumer Socialization Theory

The emergent themes suggest that consumer socialization of adolescents indeed follows Group Socialization Theory, that marketplace culture and behavior is transmitted through close friendship groups and not through parents or media per se. Overall, the data suggests that the media, the third consumer socialization factor cited widely in the literature (Roedder John 1999) does not directly inject images, behavior, and appropriate codes of conduct to adolescents unless they are transmitted via the lens of one’s close friendship group. These preliminary findings, after the application of GST into consumer research, are expected to contribute to the theoretical advancement in the field, perhaps through ‘Group Consumer Socialization Theory’. In addition, the use of friendship groups (rather than dyads or larger groups of fluid nature) will contribute to the study of consumers from a micro-social level of analysis. Furthermore, following Roedder-John’s (1999) suggestion, the under-studied issue of gender differences in socialization has been partly addressed in this study by providing the female perspective in consumer socialization.

Understanding Small Group’s Relationship with Brands

One of the main themes identified from the excerpts was ‘collective style identity’. The girls’ close-knit friendship groups function as micro brands-communities, as manifested by a collective style identity within each group. Even though a friendship group does not gather around just one brand, contrary to Muniz and O’Guinn’s (2001) brand communities, they gather around several brands and socialize by going shopping in stores where particular brands are sold. One straightforward implication of this pertains to the targeting strategies and the portraits depicted in advertisements (group vs. individuals). The excerpts also suggest that negative symbolic consumption of clothing is very strong for adolescents, and extend Banister and Hogg’s (2004) finding to adolescents, again calling for group-setting portrayals in advertisements.

Although the past literature has reported negative effects of the ‘desires for material products’ portrayed in advertisements (e.g. Martin and Kennedy 1993), some body of research (Boush, Friestad, and Rose 1994; Mangleburg and Bristol 1998; Moore and Moschis 1978) documented that adolescents develop a degree of skepticism and knowledge of the portrayals in the marketplace and are indeed more knowledgeable than they are taken to be. In addition, Moschis and Moore (1978) reported that material value system seems to arise out of basic socialization processes. In as much as fashion clothing and purchase of it has been associated with negative connotations, surprisingly, fashion emerges as a factor that facilitates female adolescents getting together and socializing in a way similar to how advertising emerges as a way of socializing in Ritson and Elliott (1999).

Although the way female adolescents use brand choices and marketplace behavior may seem as rather utilitarian, it must be noted that, common in all the excerpts is the need
to belong by wearing something common or by talking about a common subject (brands/fashion), to be self-validated, and the distancing of one’s self from the mother or parent. Taken together, these contradictory pieces of excerpts point in the direction that Western individuality (Markus and Kitayama 1991) is perhaps one of the factors that direct adolescents into their peer groups as the main socialization agent. One further insight into this might be the viewpoint that the Western kids are independent of their families and mothers or parents but they are looking to cling to their friends as a means to bond with other people, in a quasi neo-tribal way (Cova 1997).

This study can be further developed in two directions. First, the viewpoint of male adolescents can be explored, finally closing the gap in gender differences in socialization as pointed by Roedder John (1999). Secondly, the role of culture in group socialization dynamics can be explored in relation to its effects on group or social behavior.

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