

Youth Culture, Postmodernism, and Social Divisions: An Exploration of Activities, Restrictions, and Expenditures in the Leisure of Spanish University Students

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to establish whether there are class differences in the leisure patterns of university students in Southern Spain. Social class was operationalized using three indices that combined cultural and economic factors: family sociocultural status (FSCS), family economic level (FEL), and family socio-economic status (FSES). The results show that there were no important differences in the frequency of leisure activities between social classes. With respect to monthly expenditures and restrictions on leisure activities, differences existed by FEL, but not by FSCS. Therefore, the results indicate a certain homogeneity in youth leisure activities, but also indicate social class divisions within which leisure activities are experienced and consumed. Economic factors are shown as the most influential in these differences among the university student population.

KEYWORDS: Postmodernism, youth leisure, social class

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Introduction

The most advanced western societies have experienced significant transformations since the latter decades of the past century, with clear consequences for people's lifestyles. The fluidity and flexibility of our era confront people with numerous changes over the course of their lives (Giddens, 1991). In recent decades, postmodernism has been one of the principal contributions of sociological theory to the understanding of these changes (Harvey, 1989), especially in the analysis of culture and consumption (Featherstone, 1991; Slater, 1997). Postmodern theory takes as its departure point the idea that our world is fragmented and individualistic, and our daily experience is said to be marked by fragmentation, differentiation, diversity, and mobility (Rojek, 1997). Through acts of consumption, humans can create and recreate identities mediated by the enjoyment of goods and services in their material and symbolic aspects. Postmodernism, then, considers identity, association, and practice to be elements that revolve around the economy of symbols of consumer society, mediating lifestyle creation (Rojek, 1997).

Since the advent of postmodernist perspectives, classic social variables (age, social class, gender, and ethnicity) have been questioned because they seem insufficient for explaining the behavior of human groups (Butler, 1990; McAll, 1990; Milner, 1999). In this context, social class as a base of identity has been one of the most discussed variables in postindustrial societies (Milner, 1999) and is an intense point of contention in studies of youth culture. In this last area, postmodernist theoretical positions claim the dissolution of class as the central structuring factor in cultural consumption among youth (e.g., Muggleton, 2000). In opposition, structuralists insist that social divisions still exist, largely if not entirely for reasons of class (e.g. Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006). This study was designed in order to examine whether social class differences in leisure patterns exist among Spanish university students.

Postmodernism has exerted considerable influence in the analysis of youth culture, in that leisure is considered an important resource for the creation of identity (Ball, Maguire, & MacRae, 2000). Authors such as Redhead (1997), Muggleton (2000), Miles (2000), Thornton (1995), and Bennett (2000), all admittedly expressing distinct points of view, have offered postmodernist readings of youth culture on the basis of new forms of socializing, identified as "club cultures," "scenes," "neo-tribes," or "lifestyles." The idea of a youth style that is not patterned by structural class relations, gender, or ethnicity, is a common thread running through their observations. Youth groupings, these researchers argue, are based on cultural affinities of taste and aesthetics within the framework of an identity that actively expresses itself through consumption. In this way, the postmodernist vision proclaims the overriding importance of cultural elements, emphasizing the individual and his or her capacity for choice, over structural forces and class divisions. It is asserted that today's social relations do not have the same rigidity as the organizational forms of the past, demonstrating greater fluidity, dynamism, and dispersion into situations of an ephemeral character (Maffesoli, 1995).

Postmodern studies of youth culture have challenged theoretical interpretations that previously considered social class as a powerful force in defining taste, consumption, and lifestyle. In this vein, recent studies have observed a decline in the consumption of high culture and an increase in the consumption of popular culture by the upper classes in both Europe (Purhonen, Gronow, & Rahkonen, 2009; Van Eijck & Knulst, 2005) and the U.S. (DiMaggio & Mukhtar 2008). These findings seem to cast doubt on both the idea of high culture consumption among the upper classes as a symbol of distinction (Bourdieu, 1988). According to the omnivore thesis (Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996), the educated classes demonstrate a greater breadth of consumption of both high and popular culture. The blurring in social class differences in the consumption of high culture and popular culture is in line with postmodernism (Rojek, 1997). This blurring is said to be most noticeable among the young, who would represent the clearest manifestation of a superficial consumption of culture (Jameson, 1991).

However, in the debate over youth culture and consumption, there are positions far from those of postmodernism that insist on the continuing importance of structural factors in the tastes and choices of the young. Specifically, in the face of the excessive power that cultural studies have attributed to the individual, studies of youth school-to-work transitions have indicated that social divisions continue to exist in youth cultural practices and leisure (e.g., Chatterton & Hollands, 2002; Hendry, Shucksmith, Love, & Glendinning, 1993; Hollands, 1995, 2002; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; MacDonald and Shildrick, 2007; MacRae, 2004; Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006). Bennett et al. (2009) found that although it was true that the principal difference in British cultural consumption did not correspond to the dichotomy between high culture and popular culture, consumption continued to show class differences. Thus, upper-class youth might consume popular culture, but working-class youth rarely consumed any high culture (e.g., regular visits to the theatre, museums, art galleries, cinema or opera, painting, participation in artistic activities, reading books). Chatterton and Hollands (2002), Hendry et al. (1993), and Hollands (1995, 2002) have shown that social class differences produce divisions in nighttime leisure. Similarly, MacRae (2004) noted that, within club culture, there are new processes of cultural structuring that allow youth to identify with certain style groups as well as to distinguish themselves from others, thereby reflecting the influence of the old social class distinctions. Finally, a recent longitudinal study carried out in the Southern Caucasus (Roberts, Pollock, Tholen, & Tarkhnishvili, 2009) shows how young adults, after going through and sharing leisure experiences, places, and scenes with people of different social origins, ultimately tend to develop lifestyle characteristics of the social classes to which they belong.

On occasion, studies of youth leisure that adopt a more structuralist perspective have gone further, noting that class differences generally reveal themselves in subtle ways, and for this reason crude measurements need to be broken down to reveal degrees of participation, spending levels, and the quality of leisure experience (Águila, 2005; Águila et al., 2009; Bynner & Ashford, 1992; Roberts & Fagan, 1999; Roberts & Jung, 1997; Roberts & Parsell, 1994). In fact, survey results show that inequality in young people's access to cultural consumption can be minimized

by young people receiving financial help from their families, holding odd jobs, or working in the underground economy, which all lead to an increase in their consumption possibilities. Inequality can also be minimized by doing activities without high economic costs, such as listening to music, watching television, and other forms of consumption that are facilitated by technology, such as the Internet. Along these lines, various studies (e.g., Águila, 2005; Águila et al., 2009; Bynner & Ashford, 1992; Roberts & Fagan, 1999; Roberts & Jung, 1997; Roberts & Parsell, 1994, Roberts et al., 2009) have uncovered few distinctions among youth lifestyles in different European societies, meaning that youth from different social strata participate in similar leisure activities. At the same time, however, it has become clear that social differences become more evident in forms related to degrees of participation and spending levels. For example, Roberts and Fagan (1999) examined patterns of youth leisure in the former communist countries. There was no correlation between income and broad uses of leisure time among the young, whereas there was a correlation between possessions and the amount of money the young people could spend on themselves. In other words, differing socioeconomic levels did not lead to entirely different uses of leisure, but did affect the amounts of money spent and the ownership of gadgets and other leisure technologies. Studies of Spanish university students by Águila (2005) and Águila et al. (2009) reinforce this argument, since the most common leisure activities were similar among different social classes. However, there were significant differences in the amounts of money invested in social and personal amusements; the upper-class students spent more in these areas.

Therefore, the studies cited above lend weight to social class as an enduring structural factor affecting the leisure and lifestyles of youth. Hollands (2002) points out that the different conclusions of different researchers could result from the different focuses employed in investigating youth culture. On the one hand, the postmodern perspective on youth styles and identities offers a more individualistic cultural vision, examining the practices of young people in the framework of their ability to choose and their consumption of cultural symbols without questioning possible spatial divergences or spending inequalities. On the other hand, structural studies of adolescent transitions display more interest in exploring the significance of social class. Hollands (2002) establishes several epistemological and methodological critiques of the isolated use of each of these approaches, proposing instead an integration of both perspectives for a better understanding of youth culture. In fact, studies that have considered both approaches (e.g., Ball et al., 2000; Hollands, 2002; Nayak, 2003) point out that despite the tendency of the young to relate to each other using criteria of taste and affinities, as well as to construct a personal identity through consumption, the effect of structuring and segmenting factors based on classic social indicators remains present.

Hollands's (2002) integrated approach involves establishing connections between the culturalist and structuralist perspectives, in the sense of borrowing the strengths of each. However, apart from rare exceptions (Águila, 2005; Águila et al., 2009; Gil & Menéndez, 1985; Laespada & Salazar, 1999; Navarro & Mateo, 1993; Zárraga, 1989), studies of Spanish youth, specifically of university students,

have not considered social class or socioeconomic status as structuring factors in leisure patterns. Gil and Menéndez (1985) discovered differences in the tastes and standards of Spanish youth based on the social classes to which they belonged and which limited their access to cultural resources. More recently, Águila (2005) and Águila et al. (2009) have produced similar results in samples of university students. Musical consumption studies carried out among Spanish populations (López-Sintas, García-Álvarez, & Filimon, 2007) have shown that economic capital has a greater structuring effect than cultural and social capital.

Hollands (2002) states “there is much in-depth work to be conducted on the cultural dimensions of a range of transitions, including more work on student cultures” (p. 169). The present study focuses on the young university population. The growing diversity of this group (different ages, degrees of economic emancipation and/or dependence, different cultural and socioeconomic statuses, and so on) generates greater pluralism, dynamism, and variability among student consumers that override the traditional model of the elitist student. As such, it is necessary that we better understand the cultural universe of university students through their experiences with and consumption of leisure, as well as when studying, and see whether social class membership acts as a factor leading to segmentation and/or differentiation.

To date, no consensus has formed among researchers on the role played by social class in patterns of youth leisure over how to define and operationalize the social class variable. For example, the studies of Águila (2005), Laespada and Salazar (1999), and Navarro and Mateo (1993) in Spain took into consideration the subjective social class identities chosen by their subjects from three possible choices (low, middle, and upper). Águila et al. (2009) correlated subjective social class and monthly family income as a structuring variable in measuring the leisure of university youth. Gil and Menéndez (1985) used employment statistics and the educational levels of Spanish youth. In other European countries, Roberts et al. (2009) measured social class using a scale of sociocultural status as a function of the occupation and education of the parents. The objective of our work was to examine whether social class differences in leisure patterns exist (frequency of leisure activities, spending, and restrictions on leisure opportunities) among university students in a southern Spanish city. When it comes to defining social class, we have considered cultural as well as economic factors in such a way that a complementary objective of this study has been to explore whether differences in youth leisure are more closely associated with the cultural or economic factors by which social class can be defined.

Methods

Sampling

The population studied comprised 12,366 undergraduate students at the University of Almería (Spain). Of the 1,064 individuals sampled, 28 questionnaires were unusable because the questionnaire was incomplete. The final sample was composed of 1,036 Spanish students (a response rate of 97.3%), 62% females and 38% males under 30 years old with an average age of 20.9 years ($SD=2.206$). The

sampling error was $\pm 3.2\%$ with a confidence level of 95.5% ($p=q=0.5$). Sampling was random multistage. In the first stage, selection was proportional and stratified by colleges (i.e., 26% Economics; 8% Experimental Sciences; 3% Nursing; 12% Law; 31% Humanities & Educational Sciences; 20% High Technical College), and later, random by clusters of classes taken from the various years and courses of study in each college. Finally, the questionnaire was given to everyone in each cluster.

Variables

The data collection instrument was a questionnaire designed specifically for this study that included the following variables.

Parents' occupations. The proposed response categories were unemployed, public sector employee (differentiating between the categories unskilled C/D and skilled A/B), or private sector employee (unskilled, skilled non-management, management or professional).

Parents' education. The response categories were no schooling, primary school, secondary school, and tertiary studies.

Family monthly income. Each respondent indicated approximate family income, choosing from among seven ranges.

Frequency of participation in selected leisure activities. Each participant was asked about his or her frequency of participation in 18 leisure activities (1, *never or rarely*; 2, *occasionally/on holidays*; 3, *several times a month*; 4, *once a week/at weekends*; 5, *three or four times a week*; 6, *everyday/almost every day*). Activities were selected according to the most frequent leisure activities among the Spanish young (Aguinaga et al., 2005) and the University population (Águila, 2005).

Monthly expenses on different activities. We asked for levels of monthly expenditure on each of the following five activities: social amusement (going out); personal amusement (hobbies, sports, games); culture (cinema, books, music); clothing; and extras (tobacco, perfume, petrol). We offered the following alternative answers: 1, *nothing or near to nothing*; 2, *less than 12 €*; 3, *between 12 and 30 €*; 4, *between 31 and 60 €*; 5, *between 61 and 120 €*; 6, *more than 120 €*.

Restrictions on leisure time activities. Respondents marked all the restrictions they experienced among the following options: time, money, lack of facilities, friends do not do it, partner/family members do not like it; health/physical shape, and lack of skill.

Indices of social class

In order to study possible differences in leisure patterns as a function of social class, we created three indices for this variable, taking account of cultural and economic aspects, and the combination of both.

1. **Family sociocultural status (FSCS).** The variables of parents' occupation and parents' education were considered. The occupations of the parents were collapsed into two categories: "1" if they fell into the category of management or professional (private sector) or levels A/B (public sector), or "0" if they had

another occupation or were unemployed. Along the same lines, the parents' education levels were collapsed into "1" if they had tertiary education and "0" if they had not. In this way, FSCS was measured using a scale of 0-4. The subjects who received combined scores of 0 and 1 were classified as low status (53.2% of those interviewed); those who scored 2 were defined as intermediate status (29.3%); and those who scored 3 or 4 were placed in the high status group (17.5%).

2. **Family economic level (FEL).** This variable was measured by reorganizing the family monthly incomes into quartiles: level 1: less than 1200 € per month (29.0% of those interviewed); level 2: between 1201 and 1800 € (27.5%); level 3: between 1801 and 3000 € (30.8%); level 4: over 3000 € (12.7%).
3. **Family socioeconomic status (FSES).** The FSCS and monthly family income data were combined. To do this, the latter variable was collapsed into two groups: low income (up to 1800 €) and high income (over 1800€). These two groups were then combined with the three FSCS groups (low, intermediate, and high status) in a manner that yielded six FSES groups: 1) low status/low family income - LowFSCS/LowFMI- (30.2% of those interviewed); 2) low status/high income - LowFSCS/HighFMI- (23,0%); 3) intermediate status/low income - InterFSCS/LowFMI- (13.6%); 4) intermediate status/high income - InterFSCS/HighFMI- (15.7%); 5) high status/low income - HighFSCS/LowFMI- (3.2%); 6) high status/high income - HighFSCS/HighFMI- (14.3%).

Data analysis

In order to analyze the relationships between FSCS, FEL, and FSES, and to relate these to frequency of participation in different leisure activities and monthly expenditures, we calculated different ANOVAs, and performed a post hoc Scheffe test. When analyzing the relationship between FSCS, FEL, and FSES, and restrictions on leisure practices, we used chi-squared tests.

Results

Family Sociocultural Status (FSCS) and Youth Leisure

First, we examined frequencies of participation in the activities (Table 1). The only statistically significant differences were found in the categories of theatre going and newspaper/magazine reading. A Scheffe's test performed post hoc revealed differences among the three FSCS groups (low, intermediate, and high) for theatre going ($df= 2, 997; F= 5.991; p \leq .001$) and between the high status and low status groups for newspaper reading ($df= 2, 980; F= 7.055; p \leq .001$).

With respect to monthly expenditures on leisure activities (Table 2), the ANOVA test revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in any of the five categories of leisure under consideration.

Table 3 shows the differences among the seven reported restrictions on leisure activities analyzed as a function of the students' FSCS. The chi-squared test showed differences among the FSCS groups only in money limitations on their leisure activities (Table 3). Specifically, 76.7% of the low status interviewees indicated that money was a significant restriction on their leisure, compared to 65.2% of

Table 1*Activities Frequency Across FSCS*

Activity	FSCS	Mean	s.d.	F	df
Being with family	Low	4.31	1.585	.754	2,980
	Intermediate	4.17	1.518		
	High	4.41	1.692		
Being with my partner	Low	3.81	2.057	.666	2,928
	Intermediate	3.63	2.002		
	High	3.79	1.961		
Practice sports	Low	3.65	1.431	3.136	2,981
	Intermediate	3.82	1.317		
	High	3.96	1.342		
Going to the cinema	Low	2.73	.960	1.093	2,985
	Intermediate	2.60	.921		
	High	2.72	.944		
Going to the theatre	Low	1.31	.634	5.991***	2,977
	Intermediate	1.34	.648		
	High	1.61	.804		
Going to concerts	Low	1.72	.667	2.717	2,982
	Intermediate	1.80	.760		
	High	1.94	.773		
Watching TV	Low	5.87	1.491	.838	2,983
	Intermediate	5.93	1.173		
	High	5.45	1.197		
Listening to radio	Low	4.03	2.015	.316	2,978
	Intermediate	3.97	2.000		
	High	4.08	2.067		
Artistic activities	Low	2.23	1.646	3.560	2,982
	Intermediate	2.54	1.633		
	High	2.55	1.589		
Manual activity	Low	1.53	.988	.264	2,974
	Intermediate	1.72	1.025		
	High	1.65	1.097		
Listening to music	Low	5.45	.981	.087	2,987
	Intermediate	5.48	.924		
	High	5.50	.955		
Reading books	Low	3.41	1.811	4.020	2,1019
	Intermediate	3.75	1.726		
	High	3.82	1.820		
Reading newspapers/magazines	Low	3.55	1.413	7.055**	2,980
	Intermediate	3.86	1.504		
	High	4.07	1.474		
Travel/tourism	Low	2.09	.773	.454	2,977
	Intermediate	2.02	.804		
	High	2.10	.810		

Table 1 (cont.)

Activity	FSCS	Mean	s.d.	F	df
Being/going out with friends	Low	4.98	1.152	.450	2,978
	Intermediate	5.07	1.017		
	High	5.03	1.153		
Going to political meetings/ associations	Low	1.20	.605	.466	2,978
	Intermediate	1.26	.629		
	High	1.20	.690		
Going to bars or pubs	Low	3.87	1.007	1.967	2,988
	Intermediate	3.69	.971		
	High	3.86	.929		
Nothing special, just relax	Low	3.64	1.604	.633	2,974
	Intermediate	3.72	1.572		
	High	3.68	1.548		

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 2

Monthly Expense According to FSCS

Concept	FSCS	Mean	s.d.	F	df
Social amusement	Low	3.17	1.119	.159	2,986
	Intermediate	3.16	1.113		
	High	3.23	1.332		
Personal amusement	Low	1.69	.892	2.726	2,975
	Intermediate	2.03	.998		
	High	2.31	1.189		
Culture expenses	Low	2.11	.667	1.693	2,982
	Intermediate	2.27	.806		
	High	2.45	.896		
Clothing expenses	Low	2.61	1.086	2.754	2,979
	Intermediate	3.06	1.167		
	High	3.37	1.378		
Extras expenses	Low	2.65	1.187	.072	2,987
	Intermediate	2.88	1.250		
	High	3.25	1.340		

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 3*Restrictions on leisure according to FSCS*

Limitation	FSCS	%YES	χ^2	df
Money	Low	76.7	16.669 ***	2
	Intermediate	65.2		
	High	67.3		
Time	Low	74.8	.642	2
	Intermediate	78.0		
	High	74.8		
Lack of offers	Low	39.7	.512	2
	Intermediate	37.9		
	High	44.9		
Friends do other activities	Low	27.9	3.049	2
	Intermediate	22.7		
	High	21.5		
Health reasons or fitness	Low	5.4	.458	2
	Intermediate	4.5		
	High	6.5		
Family or partner doesn't like	Low	18.0	.027	2
	Intermediate	18.2		
	High	18.7		
Lack of ability	Low	6.6	.370	2
	Intermediate	7.6		
	High	9.1		

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

students in the intermediate status group and 67.3% of the subjects in the high status group.

Family Economic Level (FEL) and Youth Leisure

When considering frequency of participation in the leisure activities (Table 4), we found statistically significant differences in sports participation, going to the theatre, and reading newspapers. A Scheffe's test performed post hoc showed differences in sports participation between levels 1 and 3 ($df= 3,963$; $F= 7.071$; $p \leq .001$) and 1 and 4 ($df= 3, 963$; $F= 7.071$; $p \leq .01$); in theatre going between level 4 and all other levels ($df= 3,958$; $F= 5.771$; $p \leq .05$); and in newspaper reading between levels 1 and 4 ($df= 3,962$; $F= 7.198$; $p \leq .001$) and between levels 2 and 4 ($df= 3,962$; $F= 7.198$; $p \leq .01$).

With respect to monthly expenditures (Table 5), we found statistically significant differences among the five types of leisure under consideration.

A Scheffe's test performed post hoc showed statistically significant differences between the following levels: social amusement between level 4 and all other levels ($df= 3,968$; $F= 16.618$; $p \leq .001$); personal amusement between levels 1 and 3 ($df= 3,958$; $F= 17.496$; $p \leq .01$), 1 and 4 ($df= 3,958$; $F= 17.498$; $p \leq .001$), and between levels 2 and 4 ($df= 3,958$; $F= 17.498$; $p \leq .001$); cultural expenditures between levels

Table 4*Activities Frequency across FEL*

Activity	FEL	Mean	s.d.	F	df
Being with family	Level 1	4.28	1.55	.202	3,963
	Level 2	4.35	1.56		
	Level 3	4.26	1.62		
	Level 4	4.32	1.52		
Being with my partner	Level 1	3.83	2.01	.784	3,880
	Level 2	3.65	2.03		
	Level 3	3.82	1.98		
	Level 4	3.99	2.01		
Practice sports	Level 1	3.47	1.36	7.071***	3,963
	Level 2	3.65	1.21		
	Level 3	3.93	1.36		
	Level 4	3.98	1.55		
Going to the cinema	Level 1	2.58	.94	2.399	3,967
	Level 2	2.72	.97		
	Level 3	2.77	.94		
	Level 4	2.80	.88		
Going to the theatre	Level 1	1.25	.65	5.771**	3,958
	Level 2	1.35	.67		
	Level 3	1.35	.67		
	Level 4	1.60	.77		
Going to concerts	Level 1	1.70	.77	.854	3,964
	Level 2	1.78	.74		
	Level 3	1.77	.75		
	Level 4	1.81	.71		
Watching TV	Level 1	5.41	1.24	.568	3,965
	Level 2	5.40	1.16		
	Level 3	5.30	1.29		
	Level 4	5.42	1.09		
Listening radio	Level 1	4.00	1.94	.498	3,961
	Level 2	3.89	2.05		
	Level 3	4.01	2.03		
	Level 4	4.18	2.01		
Artistic activities	Level 1	2.29	1.62	.077	3,963
	Level 2	2.30	1.62		
	Level 3	2.35	1.67		
	Level 4	2.27	1.41		
Manual activity	Level 1	1.57	.97	1.129	3,956
	Level 2	1.56	1.02		
	Level 3	1.61	1.08		
	Level 4	1.78	1.12		
Listening music	Level 1	5.40	1.06	.888	3,969
	Level 2	5.52	.87		
	Level 3	5.51	.94		
	Level 4	5.52	.92		

Table 4 (cont.)

Activity	FEL	Mean	s.d.	F	df
Reading books	Level 1	3.36	1.72	3.118	3,962
	Level 2	3.42	1.70		
	Level 3	3.59	1.83		
	Level 4	3.98	1.73		
Reading newspapers/magazines	Level 1	3.47	1.52	7.198***	3,962
	Level 2	3.53	1.42		
	Level 3	3.81	1.50		
	Level 4	4.20	1.43		
Travel/tourism	Level 1	2.05	.92	1.339	3,957
	Level 2	2.06	.75		
	Level 3	2.11	.76		
	Level 4	2.24	.85		
Being/going out with friends	Level 1	4.93	1.07	1.275	3,961
	Level 2	5.07	1.00		
	Level 3	5.02	1.07		
	Level 4	4.88	1.21		
Going to political meetings/ associations	Level 1	1.21	.66	.286	3,960
	Level 2	1.22	.71		
	Level 3	1.19	.57		
	Level 4	1.15	.52		
Going to bars or pubs	Level 1	3.77	1.01	.834	3,968
	Level 2	3.89	.91		
	Level 3	3.84	1.12		
	Level 4	3.85	.98		
Nothing special, just relax	Level 1	3.80	1.58	1.059	3,956
	Level 2	3.71	1.56		
	Level 3	3.61	1.57		
	Level 4	3.53	1.56		

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

1 and 3 ($df = 3,964$; $F = 7.980$; $p \leq .01$), 1 and 4 ($df = 3,964$; $F = 7.980$; $p \leq .001$), and between levels 2 and 4 ($df = 3,964$; $F = 7.980$; $p \leq .01$); clothing expenditures between levels 1 and 3 ($df = 3,960$; $F = 7.201$; $p \leq .01$), 1 and 4 ($df = 3,960$; $F = 7.201$; $p \leq .001$) and between levels 2 and 4 ($df = 3,960$; $F = 7.201$; $p \leq .01$); and for extra expenditures significant differences existed between levels 1 and 3 ($df = 3,969$; $F = 8.015$; $p \leq .01$) and 1 and 4 ($df = 3,969$; $F = 8.015$; $p \leq .001$).

Table 6 shows the results of the analysis of the relationship between restrictions on leisure and FEL. Statistically significant differences were found only in lack of money as a limitation on leisure activities. The lower the FEL, the greater percentages of interviewees who reported money as a restriction on their leisure.

Table 5*Monthly Expense According to FEL*

Concept	FEL	Mean	s.d.	F	df
Social amusement	Level 1	2.88	1.021	16,618***	3,968
	Level 2	3.12	1.141		
	Level 3	3.30	1.190		
	Level 4	3.81	1.286		
Personal amusement	Level 1	1.77	.941	17,496***	3,958
	Level 2	1.97	.929		
	Level 3	2.24	1.126		
	Level 4	2.54	1.150		
Culture expenses	Level 1	2.15	.748	7,980***	3,964
	Level 2	2.26	.817		
	Level 3	2.36	.817		
	Level 4	2.61	.965		
Clothing expenses	Level 1	2.83	1.088	7,201***	3,960
	Level 2	3.04	1.201		
	Level 3	3.14	1.268		
	Level 4	3.49	1.256		
Extra expenses	Level 1	2.71	1.227	8,015***	3,969
	Level 2	2.82	1.220		
	Level 3	3.07	1.304		
	Level 4	3.35	1.316		

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

The greatest differences appear between the two most disparate categories (83.9% for level 1 and 52.9% for level 4).

Family Socioeconomic Status (FSES): Combining Family Sociocultural status and incomes

We employed the FSES variable to analyze the combined influence of sociocultural status and family income on university youth's leisure. The ANOVA comparison of leisure activity frequencies in the six FSES categories revealed no statistically significant differences. There were, however, significant differences in monthly spending (Table 7). Specifically, within each sociocultural status group, spending was higher in the high family income subgroup, except for spending on clothing, which was lower in the high status/high income group than in the low income group, although this is not a significant difference. Family income, with respect to sociocultural status, appears to be of greater importance when we compare the groups at either end of the scale. We find important differences when comparing social amusements, personal amusements, and clothing expenses. In social amusements, the low-status/high-income group had a monthly expenditure of 3.50, while that of the high status/low income group was 2.47. This difference is statistically significant ($df = 5,873$; $F = 7.332$; $p \leq .001$). The low status/high income group also had more monthly expenditure than the high status/low income

Table 6*Restrictions on Leisure According to FEL*

Limitation	FEL	%YES	χ^2	df
Money	Level 1	83.9	32.293***	3
	Level 2	74.8		
	Level 3	73.0		
	Level 4	52.9		
Time	Level 1	73.0	1.680	3
	Level 2	76.7		
	Level 3	75.0		
	Level 4	78.8		
Lack of offers	Level 1	39.8	.366	3
	Level 2	39.4		
	Level 3	41.7		
	Level 4	40.0		
Friends do other activities	Level 1	25.5	.899	3
	Level 2	26.2		
	Level 3	27.0		
	Level 4	30.6		
Health reasons or fitness	Level 1	5.8	.030	3
	Level 2	6.0		
	Level 3	5.7		
	Level 4	5.9		
Family or partner doesn't like	Level 1	18.2	.029	3
	Level 2	18.0		
	Level 3	18.3		
	Level 4	17.6		
Lack of ability	Level 1	6.6	5.937	3
	Level 2	5.4		
	Level 3	6.0		
	Level 4	12.9		

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

group in personal amusements ($df= 5,873$; $F= 7.332$; $p \leq .001$) and in clothing expenditures ($df= 5,867$; $F= 5.945$; $p \leq .001$)

Table 8 shows the relationships between restrictions on leisure and FSES. Money was the only statistically significant difference in experiences of restrictions between the six FSES groups. In line with the previously mentioned results, money was named as a restriction on leisure by a larger percentage of interviewees belonging to the low FMI groups (low FSCS/low FMI; intermediate FSCS/low FMI; high FSCS/low FMI).

Discussion

In recent years, postmodern theories of consumption and youth culture have

Table 7*Monthly Expense According to FSES*

Concept	Group	Mean	s.d.	F	df
Social amusement	LowFSCS/LowFMI	3.06	1.07	7.332***	5,873
	LowFSCS/HighFMI	3.50	1.20		
	InterFSCS/LowFMI	2.80	1.17		
	InterFSCS/HighFMI	3.40	1.28		
	HighFSCS/LowFMI	2.47	1.12		
	HighFSCS/HighFMI	3.34	1.32		
Personal amusement	LowFSCS/LowFMI	1.90	.95	7.706***	5,863
	LowFSCS/HighFMI	2.25	1.14		
	InterFSCS/LowFMI	1.76	.80		
	InterFSCS/HighFMI	2.47	1.22		
	HighFSCS/LowFMI	1.71	.99		
	HighFSCS/HighFMI	2.28	1.09		
Culture expenses	LowFSCS/LowFMI	2.21	.80	2.895*	5,869
	LowFSCS/HighFMI	2.39	.83		
	InterFSCS/LowFMI	2.20	.72		
	InterFSCS/HighFMI	2.49	.97		
	HighFSCS/LowFMI	2.27	.79		
	HighFSCS/HighFMI	2.44	.81		
Clothing expenses	LowFSCS/LowFMI	2.97	1.15	5.945***	5,867
	LowFSCS/HighFMI	3.39	1.26		
	InterFSCS/LowFMI	2.60	1.17		
	InterFSCS/HighFMI	3.12	1.36		
	HighFSCS/LowFMI	3.00	1.03		
	HighFSCS/HighFMI	2.76	1.17		
Extra expenses	LowFSCS/LowFMI	2.81	1.24	4.651***	5,874
	LowFSCS/HighFMI	3.25	1.29		
	InterFSCS/LowFMI	2.64	.98		
	InterFSCS/HighFMI	3.15	1.38		
	HighFSCS/LowFMI	2.53	1.18		
	HighFSCS/HighFMI	2.90	1.31		

*p≤ .05, ** p≤ .01, *** p≤ .001

Table 8*Restrictions on Leisure According to FSES*

Limitation	Group	%YES	F	df
Lack of money	LowFSCS/LowFMI	79.4	14.133***	5
	LowFSCS/HighFMI	70.2		
	InterFSCS/LowFMI	72.0		
	InterFSCS/HighFMI	64.7		
	HighFSCS/LowFMI	80.0		
	HighFSCS/HighFMI	67.1		

*p≤ .05, ** p≤ .01, *** p≤ .001

called class differences into question. This study has examined youth culture among university students. The goal was to investigate possible differences in the frequency of leisure practices, expenditures and perceived restrictions according to the social classes from which the students came, considering both cultural and economic factors.

Our results demonstrate that, regardless of social class, there are leisure activities with relatively high participation frequencies among all classes of university students (listening to music, watching television, social relationships, computer-based activities, sports, and going to bars). Other studies have indicated that these types of activities extend across all youth leisure cultures, whether in Spain (see Aguinaga et al., 2005; Águila, 2005; Comas et al., 2003; López et al., 2008; Rodríguez & Agulló, 1999) or in other European countries (Roberts & Fagan, 1999; Roberts & Jung, 1997; Roberts & Parsell, 1994, Roberts et al., 2009). On the other hand, activities such as going to the theatre, to concerts, artistic activities (e.g., painting, writing, etc.), considered by Bennett et al. (2009) to be typical of traditional upper class leisure, along with manual pursuits (e.g., gardening and do-it-yourself activities), travel and tourism, and attending/participating in the activities of cultural and/or political associations, occur less frequently in all the defined groups.

Our study indicates that differences in activity frequency by social class are rare. Only two (going to the theatre and reading newspapers/magazines) of our 18 activities showed differences as a function of family cultural and economic level, and the practice of sports as a function of the latter only. Thus, considering the frequency of leisure activities, the results of this study suggest weak social divisions among the sample of university students. Also, the data do not support the theory of univore cultural consumption, that is, differentiated consumption such that the upper class group prefers high culture activities, while the lower social classes opt for a greater frequency of activities typical of popular culture (Bourdieu, 1988). Nor do the results appear to support the omnivore thesis (Peterson 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996), according to which upper-class youth undertake activities of high culture as well as of popular culture, while youth belonging to groups of low status and/or low income engage only in activities of popular culture. Rather, analysis of the frequencies of the 18 leisure activities considered in this study indicates a certain homogenization of activities undertaken by university youth during their leisure time. In this way, the data appear more in line with the hypothesis that youth consume ever fewer types and events of high culture, with consumption of the same popular culture activities occurring across all groups (see also DiMaggio & Mukhtar, 2008; Purhonen et al., 2009; Van Eijck & Knulst, 2005).

Nevertheless, the existence of a certain homogeneity in youth leisure activities does not eliminate social class differences entirely. In fact, our results demonstrate differences in monthly spending and perceived restrictions by university students as a function of social class. Specifically, our data indicate that, even though monthly spending on different leisure activities did not differ with FSCS, significant differences in all the categories were found when considering FEL. Perceived restrictions on spending, noted by the students in categories such

as social and personal amusements, clothing, culture, and extras, exhibited a direct relationship to FEL.

Moreover, analyzing the relationship between monthly expenditure and FSES, the influence of FEL became more significant, given that, for the same activities, the upper-income subgroup within each status group exhibited greater spending. The importance of economic factors with regard to sociocultural status is especially clear when looking at spending on social and personal amusements and clothing. If we compare the extreme groups obtained from the combination of sociocultural status and family income, the low FCSC/high FMI group spend significantly more than the high FCSC/low FMI group on the three elements mentioned above. However, the findings reveal an interesting fact: the low FCSC/low FMI group showed greater spending than the high FCSC/high FMI group on clothing, and greater than the high FCSC/low FMI group on social activities. The greater spending by the low status and low income group on social activities and clothes buying could be a sign of conspicuous consumption as a way to feign higher sociocultural status. This is obviously speculation given that our study cannot provide a full explanation. Nevertheless, it would be interesting for further research to go into greater depth on this hypothesis.

Money was the primary restriction mentioned by all groups of students. In fact, money as a leisure-limiting factor was associated as much with FSCS as with FEL. Nevertheless, FEL was a more significant variable than FSCS. Thus, the analysis of leisure restrictions as a function of FSES indicated that for the same activities, students from any low FMI group more often said that money was a leisure-limiting factor than students from any high FMI group. Thus, 70.2% of students from the low FSCS/high FMI group named money as limiting their leisure activities, while this restriction was noted by 80.0% of students in the high FSCS/low FMI group.

Therefore, our study demonstrates that while there are no great differences in the frequency of leisure activities among university students, economic wherewithal remains a factor, and the principal factor, limiting their involvement in leisure. Our results support, on the one hand, the hypothesis of a certain homogeneity of activity in youth leisure. On the other hand, differences found in levels of expenditure uphold the claim that certain social divisions remain in the form in which these leisure activities are consumed and experienced. Thus, our results are in accordance with other studies that have found that economic limitation is a factor that structures youth leisure (Águila, 2005; Águila et al., 2009; MacDonald & Shildrick, 2007; Roberts & Fagan, 1999; Roberts & Jung, 1997; Roberts & Parsell, 1994, Roberts et al., 2009).

Postmodern theories analyze youth lifestyles as offering possibilities of choice within the context of a consumer culture. Without doubt, postmodernism has significantly contributed to the understanding of contemporary societies in which the importance of cultural symbols, plurality, and personalization by consumption are all increasing. However, perhaps, as Rojek (1997) asserts, the weakness of postmodern theory stems from the over emphasis on symbolic and representational relationships, as well as an unsatisfactory analysis of material inequalities.

We agree with Bennett (2005) in considering consumption to be a key resource for individuals in constructing their identities. Obviously, we speak of a concept of consumption that not only entails buying, but also enjoying goods and services in both their material and symbolic aspects. In fact, young people consume many things (e.g., music, TV) which do not entail an economic cost, helped by the expansion of information technologies that increase the possibility of free consumption and artistic creation. However, our findings suggest that economic factors continue to structure access to the experience of leisure activities. Without doubt, economic factors will affect what, and essentially how, one consumes. Nowadays young people have the opportunity to participate in similar leisure activities, just as Roberts (1997) identified more than a decade ago, but with different levels of spending and (presumably) quality of experience. The results obtained in this study are extremely enlightening in this regard.

As Maffesoli (1995) observed, emotional empathy reduces distinction and increases social cohesion. Bennett (1999), in defending the concept of “neo-tribes,” offers an interesting analysis of this issue in his study of young people involved in dance music scenes. For Bennett (1999), youth’s social relationships are fluid rather than fixed, and young people are shown to be a good example of late modern lifestyles where identity is constructed rather than given. We are inclined to agree with Bennett (2005, p. 256) when he states that social class does not operate as a “dead weight” that determines youths’ choices. However, the processes of construction of young people’s identities show similarities but also differences when we try to pinpoint the cultural borders that reflect both old class markers and new forms of social hierarchy and distinction (McRae, 2004).

Thus, this study underlines the importance of paying attention to possible divisions of class when youth culture is analyzed. According to Hollands (2002), it is possible that postmodern analyses do not find social divisions among young people because they have no interest in researching social divisions or because they focus solely on the most spectacular aesthetics (Shildrick & MacDonald, 2006). We propose that the analysis of social inequalities should be incorporated into cultural studies. Obviously, the analysis should not be made from a determinist and rigid structuralist perspective, but, as Hollands (2002) contends, by trying to amalgamate the cultural analysis of youth styles with structural studies of youth transitions. In fact, as Coen and Ainley (2000) have stated, young people are the ideal object of study to understand the interaction between structural forces and cultural biographies.

Our findings have a logical application for leisure equity policies. Equal access to leisure activities does not guarantee having the same opportunities. Any equity policy must consider which leisure activities are undertaken by young people, and also how these experiences are performed. Our quantitative investigation cannot venture deeply into the different forms in which students might experience the same leisure activities based on the economic capital of their families. However, we agree with Bosé (2003) that an investigation into the cultural experiences of youth would provide valuable information about social segregation and exclusion in the field of leisure. In this vein, although we recognize that young people have a tendency to share cultural niches which we could accept as being postmodern,

we have shown that economic advantages and disadvantages still persist which, to a large extent, divide youth. Our results suggest that level of family income is more important in affecting the social differentiation of youth leisure than the cultural/educational level of the family. In this sense, our findings are in accord with a recent study carried out in Spain by López-Sintas, García-Álvarez, and Filimon (2007) in the area of musical consumption, in which it was suggested that economic capital has greater structuring capacity than cultural and social capital.

Ultimately, we must consider the limits of this investigation given its exploratory nature. First, we have analyzed broad bands of leisure activities, such as going to the movies or watching television, and found similar patterns in different social classes. It would ideally be desirable to pay attention to specific tastes and types of distinctive practices and relate these to social status indicators. Second, we believe it is necessary to delve deeper into the leisure experiences of university students to try to understand their symbolic value and the effects of material factors. That is to say, we must examine meanings and identity construction processes in the leisure sphere, paying attention to possible class-based spatial and social divisions. Third, our study offers a cross-sectional snapshot. We need longitudinal research which tracks students from before, through, and after their time at university. It is possible that class differences in social and cultural assets formed during childhood become largely latent, though preserved through differences in levels of spending and associated consumption experiences, then widen and become more manifest again when students exit to different adult social class destinations. Fourth, we need research which compares students with young people who do not progress through higher education. The absence, or the weakness, of class differences among students will not necessarily hold across the entire age group. Fifth and finally, Spain, like many other European countries, has replaced its old elitist system with a present-day system of mass higher education. Our study was conducted at just one university. We need to investigate whether in Spain (and other European countries) the increase in the size of the student populations, and in the number of higher education institutions, has created stratified university systems in which different universities tend to recruit students from different social class backgrounds, dispatch them with different post-graduation life chances, and foster different patterns of leisure activity and cultural consumption according to the university attended.

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