

## As HQs da Turma da Mônica Jovem e a produção da juventude atrelada aos artefatos tecnológicos e à visibilidade nas mídias sociais

Lia Nunes SANTO<sup>1</sup> Bárbara Hees GARRÉ<sup>2</sup>

#### **Resumo:**

O artigo é um recorte de dissertação de mestrado que objetivou compreender de que modo algumas enunciações que circulam nas Histórias em Quadrinhos da Turma da Mônica Jovem auxiliam na fabricação da juventude contemporânea. Nesta pesquisa tomou-se como objeto discursivo as edições publicadas entre março de 2018 a julho de 2019. Na correnteza dos Estudos Culturais compreendeu-se a HQ como um potente artefato midiático que corrobora com a fabricação/construção de discursos sobre juventude na contemporaneidade. O trabalho aproximou-se dos estudos foucaultianos, operando com algumas ferramentas da análise do discurso. No artigo aqui apresentado, o foco de discussões situa-se em discorrer sobre um discurso que naturaliza a noção de juventude conectada aos artefatos tecnológicos e em destaque nas mídias sociais. Tais discursos são recorrentemente acionados nas HQs analisadas, colocando em operação relações de poder, subjetivando os sujeitos leitores a certas práticas e produzindo determinados modos de ser jovem na contemporaneidade.

Palavras-chaves: Educação. Michel Foucault. Modos de subjetivação. Pedagogias Culturais.

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#### **Abstract:**

The article is an excerpt from a master's thesis that aimed to understand how some enunciations that circulate in the comics of Young Monica's gang help in the fabrication of contemporary youth. In this research, the editions published between March 2018 and July 2019 were taken as a discursive object. In the current of Cultural Studies, comics were understood as a powerful media artifact that corroborates with the fabrication/construction of discourses about youth in contemporary times. The work approached Foucauldian studies, operating with some discourse analysis tools. In the article presented here, the focus of discussions lies on discussing a discourse that naturalizes the notion of youth connected to technological artifacts and highlighted in social media. Such discourses are recurrently triggered in the analyzed comics, putting power relations into operation, subjecting readers to certain practices and producing certain ways of being young in contemporary times.

**Key words**: Education. Michel Foucault. Modes of Subjectivation. Cultural Pedagogy.



# Las Historietas de Turma da Mônica Jovem y la producción de la juventud relacionada a los artefactos tecnológicos y a la visibilidad en los medios de comunicación social

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#### Resumen:

Este artículo es un recorte de disertación de maestría que tuvo como objetivo comprender de qué modo algunas enunciaciones que circulan en las historietas de Turma da Mônica Jovem apoyan la construcción de la juventud contemporánea. En esta investigación se tomó como objeto discursivo las ediciones publicadas de marzo de 2018 a julio de 2019. En la corriente de los Estudios Culturales, se comprendió la historieta como un potente artefacto mediático que corrobora la fabricación/construcción de discursos sobre juventud en la contemporaneidad. El trabajo se acercó a los estudios foucaultianos, operando con algunas herramientas del análisis del discurso. En el artículo que aquí se presenta el enfoque de las discusiones se sitúa en discurrir acerca de un discurso que naturaliza la noción de juventud conectada a los artefactos tecnológicos y en destaque en los medios de comunicación social. Estos discursos son a menudo accionados en las historietas analizadas, poniendo en uso relaciones de poder, subjetivando los sujetos lectores a ciertas prácticas y produciendo determinados modos de ser joven en la contemporaneidad.

Palabras clave: Educación. Michel Foucault. Modos de subjetivación. Pedagogias Culturales.



#### First announcements

The article we present here is an excerpt from a master's dissertation that sought to understand how the enunciations circulating in the Turma da Mônica Jovem (TMJ) comic books contribute to the construction of contemporary youth. In this work, we draw on the studies of French philosopher Michel Foucault as a theoretical and methodological framework for understanding and analyzing the empirical material. We utilized several concepts from his "toolbox,"<sup>3</sup>, such as discourse, power relations, and modes of subjectivation, which we believe are integral to the context of our analyses.

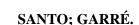
With that said, this article will discuss some ways of being young and experiencing youth in contemporary times, which are discursively constructed and frequently depicted in the TMJ comic books. These modes of youth involve subjects who are constantly connected to technological artifacts, with the goal of frequently exposing their image and experiences. This behavior, as portrayed in the comics, highlights a perception of young people as individuals in constant pursuit of acceptance and visibility of their images, as we will discuss in this article.

To conduct our analysis, we utilized several editions of the TMJ comic books, published between March 2018 and July 2019, with the aim of mapping some of the modes of youth that are discursively constructed in this cultural artifact. We chose the TMJ comics as our empirical corpus because we understand them to be a powerful material that activates power relations<sup>4</sup>, subjectivating their readers toward certain practices rather than others. Another relevant factor is that these comics have wide circulation and feature themes that are updated according to the urgencies and desires<sup>5</sup> do espaço-tempo em que estamos inseridos. of the time and space in which we are situated. Thus, we explore these modes of being a subject that is discursively constructed as a young person connected

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> According to the philosopher himself, we can use his concepts as tools. "All my books, whether History of Madness or another, can be small toolboxes. If people really want to open them, use a particular phrase, idea, or analysis as a screwdriver, or a wrench, to create a short circuit, disqualify, or break power systems, including, possibly, the very systems from which my books resulted... well then, all the better!" (FOUCAULT, 2006, p. 52).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> We will work here with the notion of "power" from a Foucauldian perspective. Thus, "when I say power, I do not mean Power' as a set of institutions and apparatuses that ensure the subjection of citizens within a given state. Nor do I understand power as a mode of subjection that, in contrast to violence, takes the form of a rule. Finally, I do not conceive of it as a general system of domination exercised by one element or group over another, whose effects, by successive derivations, permeate the entire social body." (FOUCAULT, 2017, p. 100) [author's emphasis].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The starting point is that desire is also manufactured and constituted by the power relations embedded in the environments where the individual is situated, as well as by and within the discourses that permeate them. In other words, "the correlation of power is already established wherever desire is present". (FOUCAULT, 2017, p. 89).





to online networks, constantly updating themselves, characteristic of the historical, social, and cultural moment in a "liquid modernity" (BAUMAN, 2001).

This concern with keeping up with the evolving ways of life of these subjects is evident when Mauricio de Souza, the creator and organizer of the TMJ stories, who has over two hundred thousand followers on Twitter<sup>7</sup>, mentions on that same social network that he makes a point of engaging with the audience and absorbing their ideas. His intention was to merge the world of fantasy with the aspirations and doubts of young people, combining all of this with artistic styles inspired by Japanese mang<sup>8</sup>.

To this end, we would like to state that our understanding of youth is based on the work of authors such as Fischer, Rockembach, and Ruggieri Neto. These authors approach youth as a way of being and living, as a social construct, a "state of mind" (Ruggieri Neto, 2015, p. 9), where the individual's age is not a determining factor for being considered part of a so-called youth context. In this sense, the ways of being young and living youth are produced and constituted by and within discourses that are fabricated/constructed from practices that resonate and are taken as truths, subjectivating and shaping the ways individuals live in society.

In line with the Foucauldian perspective (1995), our focus is on understanding how human beings become subjects, and under what conditions certain ways of being young and living youth are constituted. Additionally, according to Veiga-Neto (2016), "we must explain how this entity we call the subject comes to be" (p. 112), through which discourses individuals become subjects within the conditions of contemporary youth.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that we understand individuals as constantly undergoing shifts in their ways of living and their characteristics. The subject is not something fixed or "ready-made" at birth. Rather, individuals are continuously being constituted and updated, shaped by the discourses that permeate them, the environments in which they are embedded, and the relationships they establish. Therefore, we chose to analyze comics because we understand them as a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The author compares our experiences and knowledge production to the fluidity of liquids and gases, where "solids suppress time; for liquids, on the contrary, time is what matters" (BAUMAN, 2001, p. 8). In other words, solids ignore time, as their forms do not undergo radical and rapid transformations, while liquids and gases are physical states that constantly modify their structures. For these transformations, the conditions of the environment in which they are situated are crucial.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> *Twitter* is a social network and microblogging service that allows users to send and receive personal updates from other contacts in texts of up to 140 characters. These texts are known as tweets and can be sent via the service's website, by SMS, or through specific Twitter apps for smartphones, tablets, etc. Available at: https://www.significados.com.br/twitter/. Accessed on: May 22, 2021.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Available at: http://www.japones.net.br/o-que-sao-mangas/. Accessed on: May 22, 2021



Young Monica's Gang comic books and youth production related to technological tools and its visibility on social media powerful cultural artifact that exercises a potent pedagogy, educating and shaping subjects, as we will discuss in the following section, along with our theoretical-methodological trajectory undertaken in the construction of our analyses.

#### 1. Mapping Key Concepts in the Theoretical-Methodological Trajectory: Cultural Pedagogies, Power Relations, and Discourse

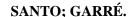
As mentioned earlier, we view youth as a way of being, as a social, cultural, and historical construct. From this perspective, for a person to be considered young and to be experiencing a condition of youth, they must be connected to ways of being, thinking, and acting that align with this state of life, regardless of their age. According to Ruggieri Neto,

Youth is a rather imprecise term that can, in everyday language, come to mean various things, ranging from a "state of mind" to a segment of a given population divided into age groups. Alongside this diversity of meanings in common communication, it is observed that youth, both as an idea and as a life experience, changes considerably over the course of historical time, in line with political, economic, and cultural transformation. (RUGGIERI NETO, 2015, p. 9)

Building on Ruggieri Neto's perspective on the understanding of youth, we will discuss a mode of youthful life that is discursively constructed and recurrently portrayed in the Turma da Mônica Jovem (TMJ) comic books. To conduct the analyses of the cited material, we employed several tools from the discourse analysis of French philosopher Michel Foucault. In this section, we will first address the TMJ comics as a powerful cultural pedagogy that shapes subjects, and then briefly outline the theoretical-methodological trajectory of the research that made the construction of this article possible. As mentioned, we used all editions of the TMJ comics published between March 2018 and July 2019, totaling sixteen issues, mapping them based on recurring themes and discursive similarities.

With that said, we recognize that, for many years, the process of education and the shaping of individuals was understood as the exclusive function of schools, families, religion, and books. However, with the emergence of Cultural Studies<sup>9</sup>, we began to understand that pedagogies are embedded in every process that involves the shaping and constitution of individuals. Thus,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Research in this field "shows that it does not aim for definitive answers or absolute truths as results, but rather seeks to explore the understanding of cultural meanings and their dissemination in contemporary societies." (SANTOS, 2016, p. 10).





pedagogical practices can be observed in everything that "produces or transforms the experience people have of themselves." (LARROSA, 1994, p. 36).

In this way, we regard TMJ comics as a pedagogy capable of producing ways of being young and living youth in contemporary times. It is a potent cultural pedagogy for disseminating behaviors, educating, and shaping its young readers, naturalizing ways of being and existing as young. We would also like to emphasize that comics are a significant empirical corpus for analyzing the discursive constructions of a young society in the contemporary era, tied to consumption, the desire to have and to be, and technologies. In this context, as Lisbôa notes:

Comic books (HQs), understood as a cultural artifact that produces meanings, constitute material that is easily comprehensible, not requiring the reader to know the written language code. This allows for an alternative understanding by readers, including children and adults who may not be formally educated (LISBÔA, 2008, p. 67)

In line with the author, we view comic books (HQs) as cultural artifacts that are easily understood due to their use of images and drawings that complement the written text, allowing readers to grasp the story even without proficiency in written language. We believe that TMJ comics subjectivize their readers through their narratives by emphasizing the importance of staying updated and connected to the virtual and media world. This is conveyed through the images and dialogues of characters who frequently use digital media and applications. In these comics, characters are subjectivized and constituted through the circulating discourses, which in turn subjectivize their readers and normalize certain ways of being while excluding others.

The fabrication and subjectivization of young individuals occur through the effects produced by and within the power relations embedded in the discourses circulating through these artifacts. It is also important to highlight that the ways of living youth, as depicted in these comics, are not natural but part of a process of naturalizing certain ways of being young in contemporary society, defining specific ways of seeing, thinking, and living youth. With this, we understand that these discourses about youth permeate the young readers of the comics, naturalizing in their experiences the same ways of being and acting that are presented in the spoken and visible aspects of the characters' lives. The naturalization of these enunciations subjects and shapes the readers in a way that brings them closer to the ways of being of the TMJ comic characters.

Such enunciations referring to the ways of being young in contemporary times presented in the comics do not depict unique ways of experiencing youth but rather those that resonate intensely in current society. In this study, we consider discursive practices as statements produced within a



specific historical time that create truths in a given context. Thus, "to engage in a discursive practice means to speak according to certain rules and to expose the relationships within a discourse" (FISCHER, 2012, p. 79). Accordingly, we apply some concepts from the "toolbox" of French philosopher Michel Foucault, examining statements that appear in our empirical corpus through the lens of a discursive analytic perspective.

To that end, the way any tool is used is intertwined with how we perceive it and how we will use it; "a stone can be used with equal effectiveness to drive a nail or to break a window" (OKSALA, 2011, p. 07). To employ Foucault's tools effectively, it is essential to be willing to question the established social order and challenge crystallized truths.

We will briefly discuss some concepts drawn from Michel Foucault's "toolbox," such as discourse, power, and modes of subjectivation. As a research method, we understand that these concepts are interlinked, enabling us to work with them as tools for discourse analysis from a Foucauldian perspective.

According to Veiga-Neto (2016), working within the perspective of discourse analysis involves:

In methodological terms, it can be said that what Foucault proposes is not to preorganize the discourses to be analyzed, nor – as I have already mentioned – to try to identify their internal logic and any supposed content of truth they carry, nor even to seek an original, remote, foundational essence, attempting to find in the unsaid of the analyzed discourses a primordial and hidden said. [...] Even silences are merely silences, for which it is not relevant to seek filling; they should be read for what they are and not as unsaid elements hiding a meaning that has not surfaced in the discourse. (VEIGA-NETO, 2016, p. 97)

Aligned with Veiga-Neto's understanding, we do not intend to unveil any hidden truths in the TMJ comics; that is, this article problematizes what is already discursively constructed within the comics, what is explicitly stated in their enunciations. We will not interpret what might be said behind any of the characters' "words" or what might be implied in any image presented in the comics. As Fischer (2012, p. 74) notes, "for Foucault, there is nothing behind the curtains, nor beneath the floor we walk on." Nor will we consider whether these modes of youth are right or wrong, true or false, as our aim is to problematize these discursivities.

In this sense, we understand that the discourses circulating in the comics are embedded in and related to a broader context, composing certain contemporary regimes of truth. As these truths





circulate and are repeatedly enacted, they often gain the force of truth, shaping and constituting subjects.

In this context, revisiting the Foucauldian perspective, it is understood that the subject is not something given or born "ready," but is constituted through processes of subjectivation. We understand that processes of subjectivation and constitution act on the bodies of subjects throughout their entire existence. However, the subjectivation of the individual can occur through different mechanisms of subjection, operating through various strategies of disciplining bodies, in order to make them docile, useful, and productive, all intertwined with relations of power and knowledge.

To that end, such strategies are immersed in the power and knowledge relations of each space and time. However, when we talk about power in Foucault's sense, we are not referring to something or someone, nor to a sovereign power where a king demands obedience from his subjects. Nor is it about a power as law, where rulers or states establish laws with the purpose of subjecting individuals in a given society at a specific historical moment.

According to Foucault (2017), power is not exclusively within the realm of law; it is not located in any person or institution, nor is it a special gift possessed by some to dominate others. Instead, power must be understood as a diversity of interrelated force dynamics that intertwine, forming chains or systems that influence the formulation of laws, institutional and social rules, and the accepted ways of thinking, acting, and behaving as subjects of a given era.

Power is embedded in all social movements that cause some form of displacement and constitution of subjects, as "there is no power exercised without a series of aims and objectives" (FOUCAULT, 2017, p. 103). It is every circulating practice that subjects individuals, that shifts, constructs, and updates their ways of thinking, acting, being, and living.

Thus, we understand that power is present in all relationships; it is the action of some that influences the actions of others, even in the smallest details. We can say "that power relations are simultaneously intentional and non-subjective" (FOUCAULT, 2017, p. 103), meaning that all relationships cause some type of effect on individuals' bodies and are tied to some form of political/social regulation and/or disciplining strategy. Consequently, individuals are subjected even in their gestures and modes of speech, as power operates in the minutest details of individuals' lives. It is a way of guiding conduct.

The term "conduct," despite its ambiguous nature, might be one of the best for capturing what is specific in power relations. "Conduct" is, at the same time, the act of "guiding" others (through more or less strict mechanisms of coercion) and the way one behaves within a more or less open field of possibilities. The exercise of power



consists in "guiding conduct" and in ordering probabilities. (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 243) [Author's emphasis]

From this perspective, power is intertwined with the ways institutions (families, religions, schools, etc.) guide conduct, with the ways discursive constructions circulate and subjectify individuals, and with the ways individuals conduct themselves. Therefore, we understand that media cultural artifacts, and specifically here, comic books (HQs), with their potential as educators and formers of individuals, are powerful strategies for guiding their readers to become certain kinds of subjects rather than others. Thus, the exercise of power over readers is at work. And, "every point of power exercise is, at the same time, a place of knowledge formation" (MACHADO, 2017, p. 28).

Discourse, in this perspective, is a set of discursive elements that can operate within different strategies. In other words, "there is no power relation without the constitution of a field of knowledge, and reciprocally, all knowledge constitutes new power relations" (MACHADO, 2017, p. 28). Thus, discourses are constituted according to social and temporal urgencies and shifts. However, one discourse does not replace another; rather, ruptures occur that alter discourses according to historical, temporal, and cultural needs.

Adopting the understanding of discourse from Foucauldian studies, we analyzed the empirical material, focusing on the level of what is said. We extracted the statements from the comic books and organized them to map their occurrences and dispersions. After this process, we organized the statements based on those that appeared most frequently and were related to each other. It is important to note that we did not find dispersion in our empirical material; that is, the statements are very aligned, articulated, and are constantly repeated and mobilized.

This analytical movement allowed us to understand the existence of a recurring discourse referring to a mode of youth where the individual is constantly connected to technological artifacts such as Smartphone<sup>10</sup>, Notebook<sup>11</sup>, Tablet<sup>12</sup> and others, as well as a pursuit of visibility on digital social networks. These mapped and extracted discursivities from the empirical material will be the focus of our discussion in the following section.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Smartphone is a mobile phone, meaning "intelligent phone" in Portuguese, and is an English-origin term. A smartphone is a mobile phone with advanced technologies, which includes programs running on an operating system, equivalent to computers. Available at: https://www.significados.com.br/smartphone/. Accessed on May 16, 2021.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Portable computer, lightweight, designed to be carried and used in different places with ease. Available at https://www.dicionarioinformal.com.br/notebook/. Accessed on May 16, 2021

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Tablet is a type of portable computer, small in size, with a thin profile and a touchscreen. It is a practical device with uses similar to those of a conventional laptop. Available at: https://www.significados.com.br/tablet/. Accessed on May 16, 2021.



SANTO; GARRÉ.

## 2. Discourses concerning young subjects: connectivity to technological artifacts and visibility on social media

System malfunction, someone has reconfigured me Where are my robot eyes? I didn't know, I hadn't realized I always thought I was alive Screws and fluid instead of joints I even thought a heart was beating here Nothing is organic, everything is programmed And I thought I had freed myself But here they come again, I know what they will do Reinstall the system Think, speak, buy, drink Read, vote, don't forget Use, be, listen, say Have, live, spend, exist Think, speak, buy, drink Read, vote, don't forget Use, be, listen, say No, sir, yes, sir No, sir, yes, sir

(Pitty, Adorável chip novo- Adorable new chip)

To begin the discussion on contemporary youth and their connectivity with technological artifacts, we start with an analysis of the lyrics of a Rock Pop song. Besides strongly addressing the topic in this section, the song also represents a cultural pedagogy and a powerful artifact that shapes subjectivities, teaching and educating individuals. We consider media cultural artifacts as powerful constituents of discursivities that shape subjects. Throughout this writing, we will explore one of the ways youth is portrayed in the TMJ comics and how this portrayal resonates with the contemporary youth's way of life. This mode of subject constitution refers to the youth who are constantly connected to technological artifacts, particularly their smartphones, tablets, and notebooks.

Let us then allow the character Marina from TMJ to start the proposed discussions. In edition number twenty, from July 2018, on page nine, she says: "Don't even think about separating me from my cell phone! Cell phone is life! Crazy!", when being interrupted in class by teacher Floyd, who informs the class that they have been selected for a summer camp. At this event, students would not have access to technological artifacts and their tools, social media, which caused considerable unrest among the students. This is evident in Cebola's speech on the same page, when he says: "These places



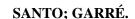
only serve to disconnect people! To take us away from technology and..." Immediately afterward, Mônica abruptly takes his phone from his hand and says: "Well, it would do you some good, Cebola! To disconnect from the internet for a few days!".

Considering the highlighted fragments, we can revisit the discussion raised by Rockembach (2018) in his dissertation, where he referred to the concept of "Digitalized Youth," which "comprises discourses that link youth to the naturalization of technological artifacts in their daily lives, such as the internet, digital social networks, and smartphones, for example" (ROCKEMBACH, 2018, p. 74 – author's emphasis). Thus, we understand that the discussions presented by the author assist us in analyzing our empirical material, as it encompasses the notion that this mode of youthful life is tied to a hyperconnectivity of these subjects with technological artifacts, which entails certain characteristic behaviors such as the need for immediacy, multitasking capability, productivity, and other.

Such discourses that highlight the hyperconnectivity of individuals to their digital devices have various effects on their experiences. Some of these effects are explicitly shown, as we can observe in issue number twenty-eight, from March 2019, where the group ends up in school detention for dismantling the study skeleton named Manuel. To the group's surprise, on page twenty-eight, the teacher says, "Cell phones are prohibited in detention!" Naturally, the character Denise panics: "WHAT?!" and the teacher explains: "he will stay in the principal's office until the end of the afternoon!" and the girl runs after the teacher, who is already outside the detention room, shouting: "I can't live without it! This is inhumane!!" Seeing her friend's distress, Mônica intervenes, saying: "As if they were going to allow cell phones in detention, right?" But Denise continues in despair, putting her hands on her face and throwing herself to the ground, exclaiming, "I can't live without my cell phone!! It's my life source! That's it! This is the end...it's over...".

Such behavior depicted in the comic seems to be recurring in other media and cultural artifacts, such as movies, newspapers, and others. From Fischer's perspective,

Alongside an objective function of informing and entertaining viewers, for example, the media would have an explicit and implicit function of "shaping them." This, in our times, does not escape the production and dissemination of techniques and procedures aimed at individuals' relationships with themselves, which are the raw material for a large part of television products and content in newspapers and magazines (FISCHER, 1997, p. 174).





In this perspective, we consider the discursivity in our contemporary society and as constructed in the comics, regarding a mode of being a digitalized youth, which configures itself as a technique that reverberates and naturalizes such behavior of connectivity to these technological artifacts. These are discursive strategies that permeate the readers, naturalizing this same way of being and acting, which is so recurrent in our empirical *corpus*.

In the continuation of the story mentioned, the teacher needs to use his cell phone in a room adjacent to the detention area. Although he uses the device discreetly, Denise manages to spot him and, quite indignant, complains to her friends: "How cruel he is! Using a cell phone right in front of me!". She stays with her friends in the detention room, while the teacher needs to answer his phone again, much to Denise's despair, who complains: "Now he's gone too far! He's parading around with his cell phone! It's like he feels my presence!", and Mônica, already tired of Denise's behavior, responds: "Stop with the drama! You'll get your phone back soon enough!" But Denise says: "It's too much for me to handle!".

It is evident how the statements highlight a connectivity and even a certain dependence of Denise on this technological artifact. Such remarks are embedded in the production of ways of being that act upon individuals' bodies in contemporary society and resonate on social media, being perceived, in a certain way, as a standard to be followed. Thus, we can understand that discourses about constant connectivity with technological artifacts circulate as a behavior that has already become naturalized, associated with a mode of youth related to contemporary times. This perception of youth shapes individuals to normalize such behaviors in their lives.

This understanding, which is constructed discursively, of connectivity to the technological artifacts described above, is recurrent in a large portion of the analyzed stories, as well as being prominently present in discourses about the ways of being of young subjects circulating in contemporary media artifacts, as depicted in the images we present below:









Image I: Family and phones united

Image II: My Phone, My Life

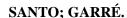
Image III: Tech Playground

We present these images to highlight how the discursive constructions found in TMJ's comics are not isolated but are reflected in broader social contexts. The images demonstrate a recurrence of connectivity and dependence on cell phones that closely mirrors the dialogues and behaviors depicted in the comics. These visuals also suggest that this "digitalized" mode of youth transcends age groups, influencing individuals regardless of their age.

Such dynamics create a desire and curiosity among individuals to engage with the latest technologies presented through cultural media pedagogies. These modern advancements encourage young people to explore and amplify their experiences, transforming their routines, ways of thinking, acting, and being with themselves and others around them. This connectivity with technological artifacts leads to various outcomes, including the exhibition and expression of personal images and identities.

According to Rockembach (2018), "there is a discursive recurrence that portrays youth as a population displaying their lives in the 'showcase' of social networks as if they were scripts of a cinematic production" (p. 80) [author's emphasis]. We include this excerpt from Rockembach's discussion on "spectacularized youth" because it aligns with the following statements about individuals who seek visibility of their images, wish to have their experiences circulating on social media, and aspire to be accepted and achieve moments of celebrity.

These modes of being, driven by the need for image exposure, characterize a discursivity in which young people are repeatedly prompted to post their daily routines on social media in order to be seen by as many people as possible. Thus, a society of spectacle is constructed and reaffirmed, which, according to Freitas (2017), is understood as "the 'society of image' in which reality and





individual subjectivity are constructed by audiovisual culture and disseminated by the media" (p. 64) [author's emphasis].

Such realities constructed through images that reverberate in media artifacts act on individuals' bodies, gaining the force of truth, subjectivizing, and prompting individuals to adopt different behaviors, from ways of being and dressing to actions that closely resemble those of the characters, affecting their constitutions as subjects down to the smallest details. This movement of reverberation of certain discourses can also be observed in issue number sixteen, from March 2018, where the character Mônica, after a video goes viral on the internet, is invited to create a YouTube channel. As a YouTuber, Mônica begins to act in society, assuming a new role as someone to be admired, followed, and imitated. The YouTuber Mônica, adopting another position in this web of relationships as an authoritative voice in the new social and digital contemporary configuration, plays a significant role in the constitution and subjectivization of youth. Of course, it's important to remember that Mônica is also subjectivized by the very discourses she enunciates.

In the cited edition, where Mônica is presented as a YouTuber, two followers of her channel are walking down the street and discussing their clothes. One says: "Nice bag, friend! "! The other replies: "Do you like it? It's from the brand Mônica uses!", and the first one says: "Look at those glasses! Just like hers, right?" the other praises: "Beautiful! I want them too! "!. However, Mônica's way of being is not just any way of being and dressing; it is immersed in power relations, in truth games that resonate more frequently to attract as many followers as possible. According to Freitas

Indeed, followers are the consumers of the spectacle of everyday trivialities, the "target audience," who set rules, show preferences, and regulate bodies as consumers. In a constant negotiation, each piece of feedback from the audience, especially positive feedback similar to customer service in companies reinforces and legitimizes good form as an essential mode of conduct for the contemporary individual. The voluntary exposure of one's daily habits and "self-management" on the internet is therefore not particularly autonomous. (FREITAS, 2017, p. 32) [author's emphasis].

Following the citation, which discusses a segment of Freitas' work on the exposure of "perfect" bodies, the more these exposed bodies align with the standards established by circulating discursive constructions, the greater the number of followers or clients will be. This number of followers/clients is related to the positive productivity of those who expose themselves, their better self-marketing, and their ideal way of life to please and cater to those seeking lifestyles to be consumed.



This movement towards achieving the best lifestyle and acquiring the greatest number of followers/clients, according to Sibilia, is understood as a new moralization of bodily practices, which have more common goals such as "succeeding in the market of appearances, achieving success or gaining efficiency, performing well physically and, above all, visually" (SIBILIA, 2004, p. 75). In other words, individuals become their own capital, their own object of consumption, their own business, and, according to Gadelha,

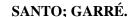
Taking oneself as capital, entertaining a relationship with oneself (and with others) where one recognizes (and others recognize) oneself as a microenterprise; and therefore, in this condition, viewing oneself as an entity operating under the constant imperative of investing in oneself such that it will yield returns, either in the medium or long term, for one's benefit and producing income streams, while rationally evaluating the cost/benefit relationships that one's decisions imply. (GADELHA, 2009, p. 149)

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We see this process of production/construction of the micro-enterprise subject in the previously mentioned March 2016 issue, number sixteen, where Mônica becomes a YouTuber. In this edition, Mônica had become famous due to a video in which she was shown saving a little girl. The girl would have been run over by a tire after a go-kart race if Mônica hadn't acted quickly. The video had intense reverberation on social media, as shown when Cebola enters Mônica's room and "snatches" the laptop from Magali's hands, claiming he needed to show something very interesting that, according to him, was circulating on social media. Cebola opens the video of Mônica saving the girl, and to her astonishment, it had received thousands of views. As Magali exclaimed in surprise in issue 16, page 18: "the video went viral!". According to the Online Portuguese Dictionary 13, "viralizar" refers to something that is "widely viewed or shared by many people, especially on social networks or messaging apps". The significant visibility of Mônica's video led to a huge number of people

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Available at: https://www.dicio.com.br/viralizar/. Accessed on: July 18, 2021.





following her on social media, as she herself reports on page 19: "Look at this! There are tons of people asking to be friends with me!"; and Cebola says, "Just accept it, come on! "!.

But the girls are still shocked by so many people following and sending friend requests, so much so that Magali, on page 19, says to Mônica: "It's not like this! You need to know who these people are!" Meanwhile, Cebola is excited and replies, "They are admirers! They watched the video and want to get to know Mônica!". However, Mônica is even more surprised when, in addition to the visibility of her image on social media and the numerous friend requests, she receives a message from a reporter from "Folha do Limoeiro" asking if she can answer some questions online.

In this way, the character Mônica's image gained significant and rapid visibility, prompting many people to follow her, learn about her life, including journalists via social media, and even show up in front of her house. Consequently, from page 23 of this same edition, an agent named Evandro visits Mônica's home to discuss with her and her parents the possibility of her having her own virtual channel where she would talk about her experiences. They all come to an agreement, but after a short time, on page 31, Evandro, Mônica's channel agent, encourages her to increase the targets for the consumption of her image. The agent expresses concern about maintaining the growth of Mônica's follower count and states: ""We need more followers... or our project will fail!" to which Mônica, surprised, responds: "But... the channel is doing well! People give a lot of praise!" Mr. Evandro continues: "But that's not enough! There's nothing different about it! Soon people will get bored! Every day, a girl with ideas just like yours appears! Your video saving the little girl was a success... but that's over now! We need more! People want new things!".

Given that, according to Mr. Evandro's understanding, Mônica's life is "boring," lacking in news that attracts people's attention, he ends up influencing her to act in ways that were not part of her routine, which made her quite worried. Although Mônica followed exactly what Mr. Evandro asked of her, at a certain point, she became frustrated. As a YouTuber who leads her followers, Mônica begins to do everything contrary to what her manager asks. During a live-streamed event, Mônica was supposed to give positive promotion to a particular brand of shampoo. However, when the reporter asks her what she thought of the product, the YouTuber responds with the following: "I found it very bad! My hair looked like a bunch of bananas!". !" Mônica's response made her agent very angry with her attitude, as she intended. However, she did not expect to receive positive feedback from the company and her followers. This positive response led her agent to view the situation as a great success, as he himself says on page 66: "A masterstroke! It couldn't have been better!". Mônica becomes desperate while talking virtually with Mr. Evandro, still on page 66, and hears him say that:



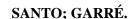
"The online users are all talking about how honest you were! Your popularity has skyrocketed after the event! They say we need more people like you! Even the sponsor liked it!". Mônica becomes increasingly alarmed by the fact that her honesty, instead of ruining her career and reputation, had the opposite effect, significantly increasing her visibility and popularity. The owner of the shampoo brand even says he will change the formula and thanks Mônica for her honesty. She cannot understand how the situation has escalated to this extent and, on page 67, reacts: "It can't be!", but Evandro reinforces: "Sales increased instantly! They want to start another campaign with you!".

From the statements presented, we can observe how Mônica's actions embody ways of life. In the depicted scenarios, the character speaks negatively about a product she was supposed to promote positively. However, as a strategy to rid herself of her agent, she decides to do everything that would be considered wrong in his eyes. Nevertheless, this action by the YouTuber led to increased popularity for her channel and a higher number of people consuming her way of being, engaging with and subjectivizing themselves through her discursive practices.

In this perspective, we can connect Mutz's (2013) words when she discusses modes of consumption and subjectivation of subjects. In this context, the author states that "it is by observing oneself, against an adequate model of the subject, which serves as a comparison, inspiration, and motivation, that it is expected one adopts new standards of conduct as a consumer" (p.72). Furthermore, regarding the comic strip fragment previously mentioned, connecting Mutz's words, it is evident how the followers of Mônica's channel take her as a role model, as a source of inspiration, as if the girl's statements could hold the power of truth to dictate ways of life.

Thus, it is evident that there is a persuasive process operating around the visibility of the character, who needs to be increasingly visible and prominent on social media, reaching a broader audience of followers. In this way, it is necessary for the subject to invest in their own body, adapting and adjusting it to the standards and demands of the present time, considering that we are inserted in a social and historical context that involves the fluidity and dissemination of information. Such fluidity and dissemination of images and ideas can occur both through prepared videos and images, as well as through the circulation of images and statements in real time.

This reverberation of enunciations as they happen contributes to the rapid pace of updating practices and ways of life, reinforcing the need for individuals to seek constant updates in their ways of being and acting in contemporary society. Thus, "the modern individual, who is qualified as a subject of rights, is transmuted into a micro-enterprise individual. (GADELHA, 2009, p. 149)





[author's emphasis], in order to keep up with the fluid dissemination of information through technological artifacts and media cultural pedagogies.

All this movement of fluid discursive updates becomes possible due to the frequent connectivity of individuals to technological artifacts. This way of being young, discursively constructed in the comics under study, revolves around a subject who is constantly connected to and dependent on technological artifacts. It aligns with the ways of experiencing youth in contemporary times that circulate within today's cultural pedagogies.

According to Sibilia,

These everyday artifacts not only provoke rapid bodily and subjective adaptations to new rhythms and experiences, allowing individuals to respond as quickly as possible to the constant need for high-performance recycling, but they also end up multiplying and becoming popular due to such changes in lifestyle. Indeed, many uses of computer paraphernalia and telecommunications, much like the latest developments in biomedical and pharmacological research, constitute strategies that contemporary subjects employ to keep up with new sociocultural pressures, thereby generating novel ways of being in the world. (SIBILIA, 2012, p. 51)

In this context, the contemporary subject uses connectivity and dependency on technological artifacts to frequently reinvent themselves, seeking their best performance and the optimal way to display it to others. This movement of seeking strategies to achieve greater visibility is intertwined with what Freitas discusses in her dissertation, "Ruínas do corpo: práticas de si e os sentidos da 'boa forma' na contemporaneidade" ("Ruins of the Body: Practices of the Self and the Meanings of 'Good Shape' in Contemporary Times"). In her research, the author explores a market of everyday lives striving for greater visibility in digital media. According to the author,

[...] the market of everyday lives, sold on digital platforms, becomes a reference manual for practices, truths, knowledge, and discourses about who we are and who we should be. It serves as a kind of guide to contemporary life, a manual for what we should aspire to and achieve. (FREITAS, 2017, p. 60).

In this perspective, individuals are in a constant state of updating their ways of being, seeking greater visibility, and aiming to dictate practices, knowledge, truths, and discourses about certain lifestyles. This reveals the underlying need for individuals to showcase themselves, to present their best image, their best performance, in order to achieve greater visibility. Additionally, there is an urgent need for a model with constant reverberation for them to follow. Thus,



Exhibitionist and performative tendencies fuel the new modes of identity construction and consumption, a spectacularization of the self aimed at achieving one effect: recognition in the eyes of others and, above all, the coveted act of being seen. In this context, subjectivation is structured around the visible surface of the body, which becomes an epidermal space for creation, a fertile ground for the expression of who each person is. (SIBÍLIA, 2004, p. 70) [author's emphasis].

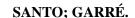
In this conception, we can observe the need for individuals to expose themselves, to achieve greater visibility, as well as the urgency for a model with constant reverberation that they can follow. This self-exposure, this spectacularization of the self, this entrepreneurship of oneself in pursuit of the best image, is once again discursively constructed in issue number thirty, where the character Titi displays an excessive concern with his body and aesthetics, causing concern for his friend Jeremias, as shown in the images below:





Image IV Image V

As seen in images IV and V, Titi's best physical performance is the primary way he expresses and exposes himself, aiming to draw attention to himself. No matter how much this character trains,





it's never good enough according to the standards he has set for himself. In this way, Titi, through a discourse of what is said and visible, influences the reader, encouraging them to believe that displaying a body with large, well-defined muscles is ideal for going to the beach and perhaps even for finding a girlfriend. As readers begin to adopt and replicate such behaviors, these discourses gain the strength of truth, circulating in different ways and in various environments.

Thus, the discourses surrounding so-called young individuals in contemporary society, as we have discussed in our analyses, fabricate and shape modes of being that emphasize the importance of visibility. However, this is not just any visibility; it is an exposure that follows certain standards and not others, as well as the necessity of always being in contact with the media.

This need to always be connected to the internet and social media is evident in issue number twenty, from July 2018, where the students from Limoeiro School go on a camping trip, during which they are not allowed to bring their cell phones, much to Denise's dismay once again: -"Waaah! I can't go the whole weekend without checking social media! This is a fate worse than death!" Mônica even tries to calm her down and takes away a tablet that Denise tries to sneak in: - "And this comes with me! You can survive without a cell phone for a day or two, Denise!". Denise, as usual, appears desperate at the thought of being separated from her cell phone and tries to convince Mônica otherwise: "Nooo! Have mercy!" Once again, we encounter the discourse of connectivity with technological artifacts and social media.

The subjects, as depicted in the discourses of the comics under study, are frequently connected to social media, and for this, certain modes of speech are part of this online universe. As seen in Denise's narrative above, the comic uses "fds" to refer to "fim de semana" (weekend). Similarly, there are other abbreviations and words that circulate in this online universe, as discussed by Castro and Karnopp,

The convenience and speed provided by technology have altered part of our written culture: in online conversations, and with the support of electronic devices, we have increasingly begun to use abbreviations, few letters, many symbols, and keywords. (2009, p. 95)

This writing style, characterized by many abbreviations, few letters, numerous symbols, and keywords, is an integral part of communication routines in online environments. In a way, this form of writing ends up subjectivizing the users of these spaces, leading them to adopt a specific mode of expression. We understand that this process is intertwined with the visibility of the subject how this



Young Monica's Gang comic books and youth production related to technological tools and its visibility on social media subject expresses themselves on social media in order to be accepted and included in a so-called desirable context.

This emphasis on visibility and frequent connectivity to technological artifacts and online social media, characteristic of the society of the spectacle, leads to improvements and advancements in the manufacturing techniques of technological devices. Ideally, these devices should be able to be present and provide online access in any environment and situation where the individual finds themselves. We can observe this update in device capabilities in issue number seventeen of TMJ, as mentioned earlier, during a submarine excursion. In this excursion, Cebola is concerned about showcasing his image on social media, but a conventional cell phone would be ruined underwater, which surprises Magali, who asks in astonishment: - Cebola! Is that tablet...?", and Cebola calmly responds: - "Waterproof? Of course! I'm posting lots of pictures from our excursion."

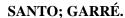
Therefore, in this situation, there is indeed an incitement to consumption, both of a technological artifact and of the subjects' own image. According to Camozzato,

Consumption does not occur solely through the act of purchasing objects, but also when we consume ourselves, a process that is operationalized through the efforts made to produce oneself in order to meet the identity demands and dictates of a specific time-space in a precise historical moment. (CAMOZZATO, 2009, p. 44)

In this perspective, individuals consume ways of being, speaking, dressing—in short, modes of existence that typically characterize a particular discourse taken as normative. This is evident in our analyses, where individuals consume a specific way of being young, which often involves the recurrent use of technological artifacts. However, we also observe individuals who consume images circulating in digital media and are concerned with updating themselves and daring to adopt new ways of life, aiming to have their routines, in some way, consumed by others, thereby ensuring their visibility. There is an enterprise and entrepreneurship of the self, where the individual invests in and manages themselves as a project.

Regarding "entrepreneurship of the self," Freitas describes,

[...] used to refer to the contemporary process in which individuals' lives and bodies are being constructed and exposed based on notions derived from business management. This process involves creating markets, partnerships, marketing strategies, and ways of being, effectively turning personal life into a form of enterprise. (FREITAS, 2017, p.19).





In other words, individuals become the very objects to be consumed, and for this to happen successfully, there is a constant need to seek their best performance to be exposed and echoed in order to subjectivate as many individuals as possible. For this consumption movement to occur, it is essential that individuals are in a state of continuous improvement and updating. The individual is encouraged to be better than themselves and others at every moment, in order to occupy the position of greatest visibility.

In line with what we presented in the excerpts from the comics, individuals strive for their best image, their best way of life, so that their routines can be exposed and accepted in a specific historical time and space. As a result, they are tirelessly seeking updates, new enunciations, and the most current ones possible. These discourses reverberate in media pedagogical artifacts, and we also observe this way of being and living embedded in the analyzed stories. Consequently, it is clear that the TMJ comics play a significant role in shaping and updating the ways of being of contemporary youth.

#### **Final considerations**

We understand that analyzing the TMJ comics has proven to be a powerful analytical strategy, considering our aim to discuss the modes of youth circulating in contemporary times and how they are discursively constructed in this material. Certain aspects are clearly delineated, such as the subjectivation of individuals through media artifacts and the power relations that circulate within them, producing effects and discourses about what it means to be young. The circulating discourses within these artifacts operate on the bodies of the characters, as well as on the bodies of the readers of these comics. Thus, "power relations and the production of knowledge are not merely elements of the superstructure; this dynamic is present in the everyday lives of individuals, producing a technical transformation of subjects and operating on their bodies." (FISCHER, 2002, p. 46)

Such knowledge, concerning a youth frequently connected to technological artifacts and concerned with their visibility, is discursively constructed in the TMJ comics and contemporary media artifacts, catering to the desires and wills of so-called young individuals. These discourses reverberate and gain the strength of truth, subjectivating and shaping these individuals in the most minute details of their routines whether in the way they dress, act, or speak. In essence, these are power relations that circulate among individuals, through cultural pedagogies and their media artifacts, constituting and constructing different ways of being young and experiencing youth.

With this in mind, we believe that by using comics as analytical material to problematize certain modes of youth that are discursively constructed and circulate in other media artifacts, we are putting



these modes of youth into question. Let us then consider how many other artifacts such as music, films, magazines, and others produce and serve as vehicles for the creation of so many ways of being young in contemporary times. This is our invitation!

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Imagem I: Disponível em: <a href="https://i.ytimg.com/vi/GtnKahHekGA/m">https://i.ytimg.com/vi/GtnKahHekGA/m</a> axresdefault.jpg

Imagem II: Disponível em: content/uploads/2017/ 04/Phone-Addiction-1080x675.jpg

Imagem III: Disponível em: <a href="https://ospyciu.files.wordpress.com/2018/01/4.jpg">https://ospyciu.files.wordpress.com/2018/01/4.jpg</a>



Imagem IV: TURMA DA MÔNICA JOVEM. Além de Jurerê. São Paulo: Panini, nº 30, maio de 2019, p. 60.

Imagem V: TURMA DA MÔNICA JOVEM. Além de Jurerê. São Paulo: Panini, nº 30, maio de 2019, p. 61

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Recebido em: 26/04/2023

Aprovado em: 06/05/2023