Which values do today's youth believe in? The values and ideal models of 280 students from some Italian schools

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Abstract. Our society doesn't always give space to young people. Generational renewal is not seen as an opportunity and is therefore often hampered by short-sighted political decisions. Consequently, a generalized crystallization is created that inevitably puts at a disadvantage those who have yet to build a future for themselves. The article proposes a series of reflections supported by updated data extracted from sociological and statistical research and from the research carried out for the master's thesis in Philosophy of Education that demonstrate how, despite the difficulties and obstacles of our time, nowadays young people they have a wealth of values. The instrument used is a questionnaire and the general objective is to implement pedagogical knowledge on the subject of values in relation to young people. The context analyzed is Italian and in particular the research of which I present some results was carried out in the city of Pistoia.

Keywords. Philosophy of Education - Youth Condition - Values - Liquid Society - Generational Change.

1. Introduction

Sometimes adolescence is connoted as the age of isolation, of disobedience, of conflicts with parents, problems with school, but it's not just this, in addition it's common to see platitudes, prejudices, and stereotypes hitting young people without indulgence. Often adults consider them people without values, without principles, without morals, but is this really so? Not really, according to sources.

When investigating the phenomenon of youth, one cannot fail to refer to the numerous sociological investigations carried out by the IARD Institute whose object of study is questions relating to the condition of young people and the evolution of attitudes and behavioral practices of the latter. . Every four years and for six editions, from 1983 to 2007, the Institute has been involved in conducting scientific research that, due to rigorous analysis and studies, represents a base of Italian social research and has made it possible to trace identikit, very changeable over time, which characterizes young people. But in the meantime, who are they? In the 1980s, the IARD considered those who were between 15 and 24 years old to be "young", but subsequent studies have shown that there has been a change in the age group of young people and from 15 to 24 years they went from 15 to 29 years until reaching the new millennium to consider youth to the span of life that goes from 15 to 34 years. Indeed, it is clear that for various reasons, large numbers of young people tran-

sition to adulthood later than their peers of previous generations and this has resulted in a widening of the range for this age group. Certainly, among the characteristics of the young people of the third millennium there is a greater flexibility, dynamism, openness to change and diversity. However, these attributes are compounded by mistrust, uncertainty and the feeling of living in a state of existential precariousness. On the other side, their identity is formed through the responses that at the individual and collective processing level they manage to derive precisely from uncertainty. To this is often added the tendency of adults to relegate young people to one side, waiting, lengthening their stay in precariousness and thus postponing their chances of making an effective contribution to society. This image suggests that the importance of generational rotation has not been understood and that in Italy an unemployment rate in the 15-34 age group of 17.8% and an unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2019 in the group of 15 to 24 years equal to 25.7%, it means that the problem does not refer only to unemployed young people, but affects the whole of society. It's a real social problem. Ours is a society that loses the opportunity to involve its young people more. Participating in the sense of giving the opportunity to express opinions heard and taken seriously means participating in decisions, being autonomous and contributing with one's own resources to the collective well-being of the community. But today's youth participate only partially in these terms. Obviously, all this has the consequences of a longer, but also slow, transition to adulthood and a reduction in planning related to the future (Buzzi C., Cavalli A., & De Lillo A., eds, 2009) .

In addition to the unemployment data, even the Italian NEETs, also related to the third quarter of 2019, are examples and worrying of a condition taken to the extreme in the European scenario. Among the 15-24 years there is 18%, while in the 15 to 34 age group the NEETs are 24.2%. As shown by the study carried out by Unicef, based on data from Eurostat and Istat from 2019 our country ranks first in Europe by number of NEETs. The Unicef report shows that in the 15 to 29 age group there are 2,116,000 inactive people present, 15.5% in the North, 19.5% in the Center and 34% in the South. Not to mention the other plague that afflicts our country, namely that related to the phenomenon of the so-called "brain drain". In the span of ten years, Italy has lost around 250,000 young people, between 15 and 34 years old, as can be seen in the IX Annual Report on the economy of immigration, presented at the Palazzo Chigi at the end of 2019, and around of a fifth of these people come from Lombardy (18.3%), followed by Sicily, Veneto and Lazio (Istat, 2019).

In light of what has been reported so far, it is certainly not easy to draw a well-defined profile of the young people of today, this is because their identities are multiple and dynamic and also the transitions they carry out are characterized by being fluid, changing depending on the context and the person in question. Another obvious aspect is that, unlike previous generations, parents now become parents at an older age, not before the age of 30, in a context of growing precariousness. But at the same time, today's young people are more flexible and mobile, often traveling abroad to gain work or study experiences. From this framework, what is desirable at the pedagogical level is to capture the positive aspects of the changes of our time, for example the emancipatory ones, which give young people the opportunity to build identities that are more flexible, more complex, more open to diversity and transformation. Therefore, it is more appropriate to stop the negative aspects of transitions to transform them into the possibility of change and conscious future planning.

2. Presentation of the research

This work, as in general the research carried out in the pedagogical field, has as its main objective the construction of knowledge of Education, for it makes use of the various epistemic techniques extracted from other Human Sciences (Mortari, 2007). Again at a general level, the objective of this work is not aimed at improving a practice or finding solutions, but rather at implementing pedagogical knowledge on the subject of values in relation to young people. Starting from this methodological premise, the specific objectives of this research are: to know what are the values that guide the choices of young people and to investigate their lifestyles dictated by the values in which they believe. I also specify that my research does not start from a pre-established theory, that is why I use an inductive method since from the analysis of individual cases I have extrapolated a generalizable theory to the sample taken into consideration.

The research was carried out in the context of a master's thesis, for this reason the reference sample is a small sample. Mine, therefore, is not a longitudinal investigation or an investigation that lasted many years within a specialized research group, but is the result of individual research and study. Given that the sample that I chose to investigate is made up of young people between the ages of 18 and 19, school was the medium that allowed me to arrive at an homogeneous sample. So I involved 12 last year classes from all high schools in the city of Pistoia, for a total of 280 students.

Total number	Sex	Coutry of birth	Schools students belong
280	49% female 51% male	94,35% Italy	62% High School (Classical, Linguistic, Artistic, Human Sciences, Scientific)
		2,14% Albania	38% Professional technical institutes
		0,71% Russia 0,35% Dominican Republic 0,35% Swiss 0,35% Romania 0,35% Ukraine 0,35% Pakistan 0,35% Morocco 0,35% Uruguay 0,35% France	

Table 1 - *Sample characteristics*

The instrument I used is a questionnaire, with a total of 28 questions with closed multiple-choice answers, structured in five thematic areas:
- First area: personal data;
- Second area: morale;
- Third area: justice;
- Fourth area: trust;
- Fifth area: the ideal models.

The questionnaire was created by me and validated by my scientific tutor Prof. Mariani (professor of Philosophy of Education) and his collaborator Dr. Falaschi. It was given to the students in paper format and I personally supplied it. I have chosen to insert questions with closed answers because in this way the detection times are contained and shortened and the classification and transcription errors are minimal (Trinchero, 2002, 2004). The questions of the questionnaire belong to scales of a single item and to scales of multi items, like Likert scale, Guttman scale, (Trisciuzzi & Corchia, 1999).

Regarding the process of data collection and analysis, the procedure lasted eight months, divided as follows:
- Phase 1: Contact with the directors;
- Phase 2: Arrangements with teachers;
- Phase 3: Supply.
- Phase 4: Data analysis with SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Science).

The first three stages lasted four months. Another four months the fourth phase.

In this article I briefly report some of the significant results that emerged from the research. However, before showing the values in which young people believe most, it is important to clarify the meaning that, in this research, has been given to the term "value" or indicates those ideal meanings that have the function of guiding action and evaluate their correspondence with the rules assumed to be valid (Odoardi, 2012). However, next to the ethical meaning of value, there is an instrumental meaning that identifies value as the end of a need, a desire or an interest. Once this aspect is defined, there are the so-called terminal values or the final states desired by people such as pleasure, self-respect, health, happiness and instrumental values or those values necessary to achieve the desired goal as such as responsibility, forgiveness, love and courage. Made this clarification, below are some results.

	Very important	Fairly important	Unimportant
Friendship	85%	14%	1%
Love	74%	25%	1%
Family	91%	8%	1%
Honesty	84%	14%	2%
Responsability	81%	18%	1%
Happiness	76%	23%	1%
Solidarity	55%	42%	3%
Health	87%	12%	1%
Free time	34%	61%	5%
Loyalty	76%	22%	2%
Respect for oneself	80%	19%	1%
Economic prestige	14%	60%	26%
Forgiveness	40%	51%	9%
Team spirit	38%	55%	7%
Respect for the enviroment	62%	33%	5%
Courage	53%	43%	4%
Peaceful coexistence	68%	27%	5%

Table B - *How important do you think the following values are in life?*

The evidence from these data shows how the value of family remains a very important value for our young people today. Think of the data from the IARD Fifth Report on the condition of youth in Italy in 2000, where it emerged, in a sample of 3,000 young people aged 15 to 34, that the most important values are individual values such as health with 92 % of the consensus and immediately after the family 87%. The same can be said of the results of research carried out in 2014 by the G. Toniolo Institute, on 1,727 people between 19 and 30 years old, which show that 70% of young Italians consider family a key value. See also the studies carried out by the psychologists of the University of Padua and the University of Valle d'Aosta and those of the University of Rome "La Sapienza". Comparing the results of the aforementioned research with those of my survey, it is clear that the values considered most important are those linked to the so-called restricted sociability, that is, family, health, friendship at the expense of collective social values. Like solidarity, respect for the environment and team spirit. To back up this, if we examine the area of the "The Ideal Models" questionnaire when faced with the question, "Among the following people, who do you consider a role model?", The answers are:

My parents	41%
My grandparents	23%
My brother/sister	7%
My best friend	6%
My boyfriend/girlfriend	4%
Teacher	5%
My favorite singer	2%
My favorite athlete	3%
Politicians	1%
My favorite actor/actress	1%
My spirit guide	3%
My favorite celebrity	2%
Agents of the armed forces	2%

Table C - *The ideal models*

It is also clear from these data that the ideal models of the majority of young people belong to the field of restricted sociability, in fact when referring to these data and those in Table B we can deduce that young people give greater weight to relationships interpersonal of a family, friendly and affective nature to the detriment of those relationships that are intertwined in broader areas of the social sphere. Consequently, the values that belong to collective sociability are not perceived as exercises of civic virtue or collective conquests, but as personal rights to assert themselves over others. That is, these values are considered useful by young people to define and defend their own restricted social dimension, they are exploited to respond to their requests for tranquility and security that only those closest to them are capable of guaranteeing. In the *54° Censis report* of 2020 this aspect of restricted sociality still emerges, for example 49.3% of young Italians argue that the elderlies should be treated after them. Having noticed this evidence, we could, as educators, ask ourselves what actions we could take towards young people to try that their values don't remain in the sphere of restricted sociality, but expand rather tan judging young people negatively, as I began at the beginning of this article.

3. Conclusions

Wasted, betrayed, voiceless: these are some of the most recent adjectives used to define the youth of the last generations (Spini, 2011). It seems that young people in the 21st century are excluded from one of the dimensions that characterize the age of youth, that is, possibility. It is as if in the face of the latter there were limitations rather than real opportunities. This is because it is since the 1980s that parental relationships have changed, it is as if there is no longer a clear distinction between the adult and the juvenile world, the so-called rites of passage are almost completely eroded by the way in which society suddenly changed. This means that young people become adults "without noticeable fractures" finding themselves alone building their own life path bombarded by the impulses of society. Thus, the end of the 20th century can be considered not only as the end of the so-called "short century", but also the end of the "century of young people" to make room for the century of "different young people" (Fabbrini & Melucci, 2000). In addition, it's evident that an anthropological transformation is taking place in which each man and each woman are increasingly becoming consuming machines, in which an "infantilization" of the adult is known and where men delegate everything they can to technologies. Here, humanity is often deprived of specific missions and tasks to fulfill, it seems that it is heading towards widespread embalming. Today more than ever young people are represented and idealized through the media, from advertising to newspaper headlines, they are the object of collective attention, but in reality theirs is a fallacious role because they are basically victims of those markets dreams, emotions, desires or rather all those markets with high turnover because they are irrational. So on the one hand there are the adults, the parents, who carry the weight of the absurdity of the system in which they live by supporting their children as long as possible so as not to make them collide with the system itself and on the other there are the young people who supported by the family, they grow up without being able to live material deprivation and build their autonomy. The girls and boys of today are thus in the grip of addiction that continues indefinitely, without much possibility of redemption; they are nothing more than the product of an individualistic society that gives us the illusion of being all different and all special, while in reality there is overwhelming conformity. This condition in which the new generations find themselves, which at first seemed a goal because finally the family was a place of care and protection, in which the little ones could dedicate themselves to their own education, without experiencing the nightmare of war or dictatorships, with the onset of globalization turned out to be a somewhat ambiguous condition (Bocchi & Ceruti, 2007).

As clarified previously, the panorama of youth is made up of young people who work, but also many unemployed and many who not only do not work, but do not even study, and society instead of listening to them, so that they contribute with their competencies and competencies to give them space and opportunities, it simply gives them a precarious disposition.

On the other hand, when a system has conservation as its objective, exclusion is part of the normal functioning of society because any alteration is seen as a threat. Therefore, the "banishing" of young people from the experiences and opportunities of active life has been disguised in different ways, for example, by long-term coexistence with

parents, by the idea of having to continuously train to reach the acquisition of the last decisive competence to become independent from the family, but which is never really the last. However, once the finances to carry out all this were finished, the socio-political system turned out not to be at the forefront and not competent to really give space to the young. We all know that youth is an unrepeatable stage of life for energy and physical strength, for the desire to experiment, for the will to test and take on challenges, to be able to dedicate themselves to their own interests without any other concerns. In contrast, the market society does nothing but offer low-skilled jobs, grant few opportunities, offer low-paying jobs, and not empower. We live in a society that is separated by age, that segments by objective, that segregates by social status, we live in a reality in which young people are often left alone because adults live in total frenzy. This perceived fragmentation at multiple levels and dimensions refers to a metaphor, which leads to the final reflection, used for the first time by De Rita in the introduction to the 2007 *41° Censis Report*, namely, that of connoting individuals as corianders. Because what is, in fact, the characteristic of the corianders? That when they fall to the ground they are next to each other, but not together (De Rita, 2007). This is an evocative and representative metaphor both of the interpersonal relationships that both young and old undertake, as well as of the non-cohesive reality in which we live. Sometimes people become true islands in their own right, corianders to return to the metaphor, and young people find themselves so lost, with wavering reference points to travel the roads of life. Despite this scenario, young people have values, they have ideals, as highlighted in this article.

Even in the past, it has happened that we had difficulties in framing and deciphering who young people were and what precisely their task was within society. Today this difficulty is probably accompanied by others that are due to the context of globalization and the awareness of having started a profound transition that from the previous century led us to the new millennium. Expressions such as "globalization", "liquid society", "uncertainty", "social networks" are certainly known by many adults, but the young people of our society live them directly in their construction not only of existence, but also of their own identity. That is why perhaps in the eyes of adults they seem so different and difficult to decipher, but in reality our girls and boys do nothing more than live in sync with their own historical dimension.

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