COMMUNICATION AMONG MEDITERRANEAN YOUNG PEOPLE: NEW AND OLD TECHNOLOGIES TO BUILD A POST-MODERN IDENTITY

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Abstract: *Socialization in post-modern society relies primarily on the individual and his potential of interaction and expresses itself through new forms of social relations that tend to go towards the outsider, meant as other than himself. Individualization brings traditional educational agencies to undergo changes: family and school are no longer the same and are no longer sufficient and this makes it difficult for each subject, particularly when young, to implement an identity project. However, every society, in every historical period, offers to contemporaries something on which they continue to feel unique (recognizing themselves as individuals) and, at the same time, in accordance with others (identify themselves as part of a group). Social networks are a new form of socialization that is configured as a socializing practice that utilizes networks to extend acquaintances and friendships. Social bonds and relationships, in doing so, are always potentially more extensible.*

In order to support this thesis, we present the results of two researches: a quantitative analysis on an ad-hoc questionnaire compiled by 250 high school and University students, who live in Veneto (a region sited in the North of Italy) on their communicative preferences; and a quali-quantitative research which investigates the contents of " MeYouMe-Mediterranean Youth Meeting" Facebook posts sent by young people, that discuss and share the social policies of the Mediterranean Countries. Both the studies had the aim to investigate the desires and reasons for encountering among groups of young people from different cultures.

Results will evidence the communicative skills of young people and how they succeed (or fail) in building a path of socialization in which various social networks, either primary or secondary, interweave and mediate what seems distant and incomprehensible.

Keywords: socialization, social networks, flexible society.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is friendship? The main relationships that humans exchange can be divided into primary and secondary. The first are those arising from parental bonds and given by blood ties, the latter are based on friendship networks built on trust. Many different forms of networks exists, influencing identity and behavior. With the advent of modern technologies human relationships cannot only take place "in real life" but are also expanded by widening or building new "distant" relationships.

In networks, friendship is a real search for sociality in a world that does not find any correspondence with face to face relationships, so much so that it is possible to speak of 'sociality overload'. In social network many «friendship» requests are received by both unknown and known persons, and often no selection is made as being sought represents a pleasure. Many users, moreover, desire a large number of contacts, to be «connected to all», although face to face and network friendship have the same rules and it is not possible to maintain a close relationship with more than 5 people[1].

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[1] According to Dubar's law, the maximum number of friends an individual can manage is 148. But usually intimacy cannot be shared with more than 5 persons.

Friendship is the recognition of the other implying the responsibility of a choice and stands as bond desired by those experiencing a feeling and a favorable predisposition towards the other person (Nedelman, 1991). A friend is a mirror where each of us is reflected and friendship itself is a form of social bonding, and interdependent relationship involving trust, sincerity, caring, worth and the ability to get into someone else's shoes. The friend must be chosen outside of any constraint and instrumental evaluation because friendship, despite being an intense feeling, is fragile:

> the intensity is determined by affection, by getting involved and by investing in terms of mutual recognition, all high-risk situations because often people do not know how to respond to others' changes or to recognize their own. The rules of the game can change ' without participants realizing it (Rebughini, Ghisleni, 2006:29).

Friendship is, in fact, a specific form of social bonding, a special interpersonal relationship that implies some features as constants: sincerity, trust and ability to get into someone else's shoes. Having friends means sharing impressions, moods, confidences and creative activities. It is a relationship where the symbolic exchange of narratives and actions give voice to a number of personality characteristics which otherwise would find no other social place where to manifest (Ghisleni, Rebughini, 2006:7).

The friendly sentiment is also a privileged observatory to describe the most general character of society. Simmel (1983) was interested in relationships that take place in the private and intimate sphere, and his interest in friendship dealt with social and emotional relationships subjected to the urban society transformations, considered a privileged space for subjectivity. The process of individualization, that characterizes modernity,

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The number of friends to keep in touch with is about 15 and trusted acquaintances are threefold. The dimension of sociality acquires the meaning of individual ability and thus becomes a measure of the position the individual occupies in the context in which he lives (Franks Schianchi, 201:169).

benefits of a specialization in friendships: with friends you share, mainly, specific interests (culture, sport, hobbies). The friendly bond is symmetric and intimate, based on trust and perceived and experienced in terms of a space where to express the self.

1.2 Network friendship. Narrating, recounting, describing themselves, creates relationships that are implemented between people and allow the rise of bonds representing the world of socialization. The social structure is implemented, mainly, by conversations and, as Collins (1980) states, sociology is firstly meant to explain the discourses among humans. A way to analyze the institutions is to consider the different types of conversation taking place in various social situations, each defined by all conversations that previously took place.

People engaging in conversations, of any kind, considered they 'friends' and chatting can be the result of conversational exchanges where individuals recognize friendship bonds showing sides of the self deemed positive. The rituals involved in "social chatting" are mutually rewarding exchanges that establish a light and pleasant bond, though weak. This weakness is due to the fact that the communication is symmetric as it takes into account exclusively meta-communication. Networks friendly relationship can exist next to more challenging intimate relationships because they don't excessive obligations. Online friendship request simply represents a declaration of mutual recognition

In face-to-face communications the identity remains fairly stable, but the same does not happen in social networks or, at least, this is not the rule since what an individual is, and how it appears to the perception of others, depends on information he is willing or intend to provide. This opportunity to choose which mask to wear in network communicative interaction makes it possible for the individual to play with his/her own identity and appearance. Self presentation and the identification by other users are expressed with the progress of the dialogue and are not established instantly as in face-to-face communication. This feature gives individuals the opportunity to hide in anonymity and to

select only those information related to their individual identity, social and physical, that they want to disclose, choosing among those available in real life. The tendency is, thus, to show a better self subjected to a "virtual embellishment" (Roversi, 2001: 97).

The opportunity offered by social networks to exchange and share experiences, enables a sociality within the virtual community that, generally, has no interest in a wider social dimension. Anyone who decides to be visible can enjoy a momentary popularity and live the illusion of being a protagonist, which allows him/her to overcome everyday life frustration. If once private life was irrelevant, in networks now it is shown because it represents us, it says who we are, and makes us worth interest. The view/check of others is worth exchanging privacy with recognition: we expose our private world to solicit the attention of others. Bonds considered weak become ' strong ' in the network and are highly requested although rarely they lead to a lasting commitment (Franks Schianchi, 2011:221).

2. THE RESEARCH

In this work we report data from two studies on youth aimed of investigating the use of new communication technologies at both local and global level: the first local, (with data collected in Veneto-Italy) has been conducted using a self-report questionnaire prepared from scratch to evaluate how high school and university students use various communication technologies in their daily lives and, especially how new and old technologies influence the maintenance or renewing of friendship networks. The probabilistic sample includes 250 subjects, 38.8% males and 61.2% female. Data were collected in Fall 2011.

The first question referred to the use, presented in Table 1 in descending order, of technological means showing mobile phone as the most used, followed by computer and the internet, IPod and MP3 player. Traditional landline appears last.

Table 1 How often/much do you use the following media?

Media	%
Mobile phone	96.5
Computer	94.3
Internet	92.1
IPod/MP3 player	77.1
Landline	72.2

Results showed that mobile phone is the most used technology with no gender differences.. Regarding the use of computers, 30% of males versus 12% of females uses it for more than two hours a day (p = 0.001). As for landline phone use: even though 80% of males and 58% of females uses it for less than 30 minutes a day (p = 0.001), 6% of girls still uses it for more than two hours a day compared to 2% of males. Girls utilize also the IPod more: 88% vs. 71% males (p = 0.001). Mobile phone is generally used to send text messages (SMS) (95.6%), followed by voice calls (71.4%), ring calls (44.5%), and finally MMS (24.2%). One of the most relevant aspects investigates was its relational use as reported in Table 2

Table 1 Relational use of media

Mode	Friend	Family member	Acquaintance	Partner	Stranger
Voice call	73.5	**88.9**	40.7	50.4	19.0
Text (Sms)	**90.7**	58.8	27.0	60.2	10.2
Chat	**68.0**	16.0	9.4	43.1	8.0
Social Netwok	**67.6**	18.8	13.3	37.1	8.0
In person	**84.4**	76.4	57.3	57.3	12.4
e-mail	**34.7**	14.7	15.6	14.7	10.7

Results show that the voice contact (88.9%) is preferred with family members, while SMS prevails with friends, and meeting in person with acquaintances (57.3%). With a partner the first communication mode is by SMS (60.2%) followed by voice call (50.4%). With strangers contacts are rare (with occasional reports all modes). If students want to organize an evening, they tend to use primary the phone (71.1%), followed by meeting in person (60%) and the chat room (35.6%). It is worth noticing that in this age group the Social Network is used to consolidate or relate with friends (67.6%) and chat contacts occur between people that know each already. From these results it is possible to deduct that contact/communication modalities are overlapping and in competition offering an ample array of choices in different moments/times of the day. With reference to the time of use, in fact, the Internet is preferred in the evening (62.1%) with connections that last less than two hours for 28.9% of users and less than 1 hour for 32.2%. It can be thus concluded that evening is the time of day most users have the greater amount of time to dedicate to friends or the web (Internet), despite the communication mean used.

The second study conducted has an international feature as it analyses the body of data derived from Facebook. Youth is the phase of life when future is designed. Despite the difficulties of this period, as they say "there is a whole life ahead of you", and still the desire to meet others. Such desire is also evident in the large international youth gatherings facilitated by major events organized through the Web and social networks. In this paper we will examine in particular how the Mediterranean youth meeting in 2008, resulted in ties among young from different States overlooking the sea and how these bonds strengthened.

In contemporary society we are witnessing a progressive sinking of those great ideals that have supported social groups throughout the Western modernity. The main social institutions have seen their denotative boundaries blurring and gradually citizens are taking on the support of the population.

Volunteer groups are organized and their civic and social engagement is based on their sensitivity and skills. In the international context, they represent a great resource for the community. In light of these assumptions it is interesting to understand what are the narratives these social groups use to build the world. Their anticipations and representation limit the pragmatic choices that will be implemented in the community context.

The peaceful and cooperative future is in the hands of young people that only by knowing and recognizing themselves can create a better life for all. Modern technologies are genuine tools of communication, friendship and peace. In the current world where is not always necessary to move from home to meet, thanks to internet, tools such as Facebook the most advanced services in the development of social network although they do not represent an arrival point in the transformation of computers into social mediums. One of the slogans used in the 2011 Meeting was: The Mediterranean, a sea of young people.

It is important here to remember, that as it happens in life, in SN most relationships are not friendships, and also that not all friends are equal. Friendship is based on trust, discovering to be in harmony and reciprocally available. Finding in a friend what the individual is lacking makes each other's differences a component as important as empathy, which allows for the exploration and admiration of such differences (Ghisleni, Rebughini, 2006:106). The circumstances in which friendship arises can be the most different, although usually it emerges from shared experiences, pleasant or not, but emotionally meaningful.

> The voluntary aspect and element of choice appear initially in contingent circumstances in itself favorable to beginning a friendly relationship: friendship is sought, a particular person is chosen, recognized, studied and included in a relationship where the individual is continuously forced to confront the other through accepting each other differences, even when it was chosen for his/her similarity (Ghisleni, Rebughini, 2006:107).

The significance of a relationship not only depends on the means of communication used, because those who want to develop interpersonal relationships tend to adapt their communication strategies to the opportunities offered by the medium they are using. The pro-social behavior implemented by the social actors that communicate is present in every situation and by means of any tool used (Riva, 2010:104). The site can be configured as a virtual community, allowing virtual friends never knew in real life, to enter into a social network. Transforming the SN in "community" is a process that requires time and willingness to adapt to SN's interaction characteristics.

This second research aims at identifying the narrative repertoires used by volunteers and particularly by the Mediterranean youth[2] to build, using the web, actions of social change. Our research project is based the analysis of the discourses expressed through dialogues among young people in forums, discussions and web social networks. The research aims to observe how these online contributes represent a transformative process enhanced by young volunteers. With reference to the specific aim of the research, namely to delineate the narrative repertoires emerging from the youth volunteers in the Mediterranean following the youth meeting and in the light of what has been obtained from the procedures described here, we chose to proceed with the analysis of Lexical Correspondences using the software Spad (Bolasco et al., 1999).

With reference to this procedure, the Spad software lets you apply an analysis of Lexical Correspondences to a contingency table (called lexical table) where rows contain the graphic forms of the vocabulary and columns in the corpus represent the partition of variables in the analysis. For the construction of the contingency table where the analysis of Lexical Correspondences have been applied, we have identified two ways for the categorical variable "types", meaning ' texts

produced spontaneously by young. From the application of these procedures we obtained a vocabulary containing 3207 different graphic forms for the analysis of the following Facebook pages and groups: Me Region – Many Network (Middle East), NA Region – Many Network (North Africa), Many Network, MeYouMe – Mediterranean Youth Meeting.

Graph 1 (fig.1) below represents the factor analysis on the 50 most frequent occurrences on Facebook. The chart evidences that the majority of population has posted on Facebook and has expressed chorally some constructs at the intersection of the axes. Specific clusters are also evident, such as the repertoire of "schooling", composed of the constructs: "University", "skills" and "students" and "provide" (see cluster). Here are some exemplifying excerpts, "we work with volunteers from all universities", "exploring this opportunity and engaging academically, culturally and socially with our University"; "it is the largest University in Palestine. Students come from different regions of the country searching for knowledge and education: "a focal point for the University is the active and responsible participation of students to community life". The University is described as a place where to build knowledge and confront.

In Graph 1 looking at the spatial transposition of the factor analysis on websites, we noticed 6 repertoires of meaning, respectively three above the central axis and three below, in a symmetric form. In cluster A, including the words "community, political, person, law and democracy", we identified a repertoire oriented toward defining reality through institutional/bureaucratic, like some sort of formal and normative limit. Here are some phrases as examples: "a right of participation in the future of our country"; "the population has the right to contest"; "greater political involvement"; "political and institutional system"; "active and democratic participation"; "democratic transition".

In the upper axis we identified cluster B, composed of the words "religion", "should", "may", "must", a dimension of action where the religion itself became a constituent part. In

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[2] The 2011 edition was held in Cosenza, from the 27th to the 31st of October, was open to 250 young people, half of them Italian and half from North Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans and southern Europe.

the text are evident statements as: "Arab world"; "unity is possible beyond religion"; "religion must stay out of our activity" in a sort of clear representation where for sake of collaboration and dialogue, religion must be regarded as a personal peculiarity distant from arguments related to the community and politics (view cluster A).
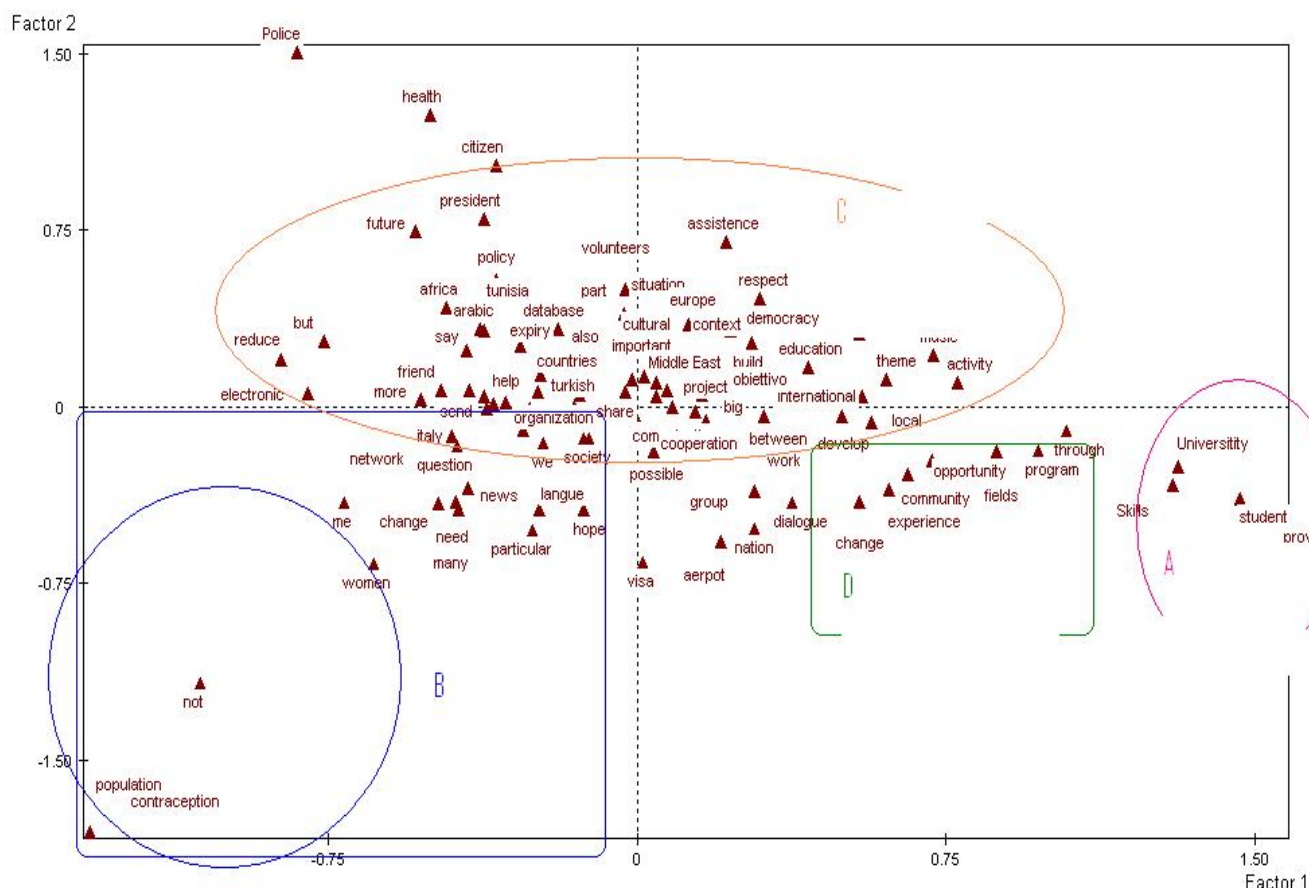

Fig.1 Factor analysis for Facebook posts

In cluster C themes such as culture and international opportunity emerged where an international comparison through listening and sharing of different cultures in order to promote a group culture freed from national borders is made possible. In the text we find the following arguments: "international cooperation"; "it is possible that international observers"; "that among them exchange experiences, culture"; "To facilitate the spread of a solidarity culture"; "Affirming the culture and practice of dialogue and mutual cooperation." It seem to evidence a definition of international dialogue as taking place only through an effective construction of a democratic culture based on cooperation.

Cluster D delineate the relevance of the argument or the substratum of generated speeches. Cluster D consists of "Africa", "economic", "way", "national", "Europe", "big University". In the text some exemplifying examples are: "Italian economic context"; "social and economic plan"; "social and economic"; "national level".

From Cluster E a collection characterized by the synthesis of group thus shared actions emerged, not surprisingly consisting of terms such as "building", "experience", "designing", "theme", "common", "Exchange" etc. Here are some examples from the corpus "creating a network of volunteers"; "Creating a confronting network"; "knowledge and appreciation of differences, for social cohesion and peace; "more than 200 youths from 22 Countries to design new forms of active participation and create a network of

associations in the third sector". The latter phrase extrapolated from the text stands as a clear summary of the clusters analyzed expressing the group dimension of acting towards a shared goal.

Finally, in cluster F we found a set of words oriented towards the future that sees youth are protagonists and on which they open a discussion to create social change. The words characteristic of this cluster are: "debate", "work", "social", "future", "important", "cooperation", "role", "space", "process", etc. In the text, among others, we found the following examples: "youth starring role"; "starring role and youth participation"; "We design our future"; "social inclusion and respect for the environment in the entire social fabric"; "promoting intercultural dialogue".

3. CONCLUSION

Results from the first study show that students tend to entertain relationships with friends, family and acquaintances, people they are familiar with, using different type of media, while strangers, meeting face-to-face is more frequent! To those we are "close to" we can send messages, use voice calls and, of course, meet them in person.

The «warm» of community social network, used concurrently or alternatively to other forms of communication, offers a new relational perspective to the individual and brings comfort to the individual in a world that has made weak even the prevailing form of bond and protection, like family and community (Franks, Scianchi, 2011). Ultimately, if you were to establish the kind of relationship that unfolds in social networks you might think of focused social occasions acting more as those not focused. Goffman (1969) established precise rules for social occasions that he intended to be face-to-face, but that might be suitable even to virtual ones.

Results of the second study showed that Facebook is more informal, is more linked to the vitality and immediacy of youth friendship which, precisely because it is a "weak" link, contribute to the unification and the sharing of both everyday life and big events. This leads youths to feel united and to recognize the importance of their own and others' difference.

Bauman (2004: 82) notes that:

it seems that the most fruitful result of virtual proximity is the separation of communication and relationship. Unlike old-fashioned topographic proximity, it does not require bonds to be already established, nor it implies establishing them. ' Be connected ' is less expensive than being romantically involved, but also considerably less productive in terms of construction and preservation of ties

According to Pahl (2000) friendship can offer a chance to reflect on themselves and appears as a space of dialogue. In the processes of identification, friends are indispensable because they perform a function of reflectivity which help to keep contact with the evolving self, through the mutual recognition that depends on intensity of friendship and the expectations of partners. Those who care about friendship in Social networks will transform from mere spectators in directors and actors, showman, entertainers, making most of their participation an extension of interpersonal face-to-face communication: new media, promote in fact, the development of the sense of sharing and belonging, although remote participation is often seen and/or attributed to persons who suffer from exclusion and isolation.

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