



How do teens think about friendship? And what is their relationship with rules - established by their parents or teachers? Further, how do they see themselves within their own families, and what does it really mean to them to be in love with someone? We're not talking about a game where the winner is the player who answers correctly the classic existential questions of adolescents. Rather, this is part of the latest research project from Family and Media, who wanted to examine the emotions, thoughts and reflections of the latest generation – those who scholars define as "Generation Z", the kids raised on bread, Internet and tablets. **Adolescents forever hyper-connected but elusive, who prefer to send a Whatsapp message than speak face to face. Teens who prefer TV drama to film, devourers of miniseries streamed on Netflix rather than the Harry Potter saga loved by their older siblings.**

The research team at Family and Media, in cooperation with the ANSPI (St. Paul Italian Association), recently conducted a study to highlight the behaviour of these kids, with particular emphasis on the use of the television series.

The aim of the research

First – don't think in terms of research offering statistics and percentages. Rather, think of flesh and bone teens that, with spontaneity and enthusiasm, reveal something about themselves and their way of seeing life.

It was this type of research that took place: **the research team came into contact with groups of adolescents, establishing a relationship with them.** They were listened to and closely observed to understand the way they look at the reality. The purpose? To imagine and inspire educational programs born from contact with these young people.

The research methodology

To undertake our research, which took place between June and October 2016, three groups of young people aged between 14 and 20 years were identified across three different regions (Lazio, Umbria, Emilia Romagna).

The young people were asked to view the first episode of Braccialetti Rossi (Red bracelets), a drama that has had enormous success among teenagers. The story follows six young people who become friends in hospital, sharing many experiences ... joys, fears, suffering, and disappointments.

The interviewees, through an activity that was designed as a game, were faced with situations and themes that had emerged during the episode. **It was incredible to see the seriousness with which they confronted the issues and the openness with which – between themselves and with the interviewer - they shared their thoughts, experiences and extremely personal fears, unafraid even to reveal the intimate details.**

Many problems involved – for example – the difficulties of family life or how they dealt with disputes with friends or boyfriends. **They were not ashamed to express their fears and their feelings.**

Key findings

The responses were extremely varied: on the issue of "friendship", the participants had similar perspectives, but on other subjects, differing views arose. For some, for example, intimacy was to only be experienced with and for love, while for others there was nothing wrong with 'a bit of fun for a night'. For some, rules were the basis of an authentic freedom, while others perceived as an external brake to override. For some, sharing and dialogue were essential elements in the family; others were simply regarded as

"channels" for an exchange of information.

However, the arguments and reflections offered by participants were well-reasoned and accurate: this should tell us a lot about the feelings that young people have towards these issues and stimulate us to face with greater seriousness these issues in the places they hangout in.

The use of data for the purpose of education

A thorough read of this research may of great use above all for parents – but also for those working with youth – and especially in the training of new teachers. First, because many will ask whether the information obtained also applies to their own context, and their own children. Second, because it is research that can be easily repeated in every environment, at very low cost.

Often it is taken for granted that certain content have been understood and assimilated by youth - this is not always the case. That's why it can be useful to listen to what is really going on before making any kind of suggestion.

This is what we tried to do, and what we want to share this with our readers. Therefore, if you have time and your curiosity had been raised – we invite you to read the research in its entirety.