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Digital Technologies and Socialization[3].
Notes from the SMILEY Project

Abstract

The lively debate about the socialization and in specific way about the exclusion practices in schools all over Europe Union imposes the necessity of framing new forms of peaceful interactions between non-homogeneous social groups. Starting form this core issues, this awareness has been rooted into an action-research project named SMILEY, (Social Mindedness In LEarning CommunitY, funded under the Lifelong Learning Programme-Comenius, and carried out from January 2011 to December 2012). SMILEY wants to present an "exit strategy" based upon the centrality of the social dimension of development, expressed by values, social cohesion, solidarity and respect for gender equality: examples of what "social mindedness" means for the European society. This target was achieved through an integrated system of "online" and "offline" activities catalysed by an e-learning platform hosting an ERPG (Educational Role-Playing Game) named "Your-Town" connecting students and teachers from the partner countries: Italy, Turkey, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom. SMILEY project shed a light upon some interesting remarks in order to better understand the

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youth reality both into the school and daily life. Following a strictly socio-logical perspective, SMILEY "latent" function in educational process was much more important that the manifest one. A positive triangulation into the learning contest seems to be the winning factor for a successful learn-ing experience in which appraise a positive and constitutive link between school, family and creative personality of the student. In this direction it is possible to forecast a course to democratic.

Key words

digital technology, socialization, school environment, European project

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a growing and lively debate about the exclusion practices in schools all over Europe that imposes the necessity of framing new forms of peaceful interactions between non-homogeneous social groups. Taking into account this contextual consideration, the increasing amount of data and research that focuses on the dynamics of integration and peaceful coexistence within the European edu-cational context has revealed a problematic image of European Union educational systems[4]. Despite the fact that the educational system is considered as a "conflict-ing space", the social relevance (and the related social value) of the daily life at school suggests that classrooms are still "good places" to tackle the problem of exclusion practices as a human right issue. This consideration implies that the new

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[4] See for example: *The Impact of Comparative Education Research on Institutional Theory. International Perspective on Education and Society*, D.P.Baker, A.W.Wiseman (eds.), London 2006; L.E. Agnich, Y. Miyazaki, *A Multilevel Cross-National Analysis of Direct and Indirect Forms of School Violence*, "Journal of School Violence" 2013, Vol. 12, Issue 4, pp. 319–339; J. Tolsma, I. Van Deurzen, T.H. Stark, R. Veenstra, *Who Is Bullying Whom in Ethnically Diverse Primary Schools? Exploring Links between Bullying, Ethnicity, and Ethnic Diversity in Dutch Primary Schools*, "Social Networks" January 2013, Vol. 35, Issue 1, pp. 51–61; J.S. Hong, D.L. Espelage, *A Review of Research On Bullying And Peer Victimization In School: An Ecological System Analysis*, "Aggression and Violent Behavior" July–August 2012, Vol. 17, Issue 4, pp. 311–322; E. Esoh, *Discriminatory Bullying. A New Intercultural Challenge*, Milano 2013; P.Stavrinides, A. Tsivitanou, M.Nikiforou, V.Hawa, V. Tsolia, *Longitudinal Associations Between Bullying and Children's Preference for Television Violence*, "International Journal of Criminology and Sociology" 2013, No. 2, pp. 72–78; L.M. Williams, A.A. Peguero, *The Impact of School Bullying on Racial/Ethnic Achievement*, "Race and Social Problems" December 2013, Vol. 5, Issue 4, pp. 296–308; *Children Voices. Interethnic Violence in the School Environment*, Z. Medarić, M. Sedmak (eds.), Koper 2013.

generations require new educational paths in order to harmonically develop social awareness and civic mindedness.

Starting form this core issues, this awareness has been rooted into an action-research project named SMILEY[5] (Social Mindedness In LEarning CommunitY). SMILEY wants to present an "exit strategy" based upon the centrality of the social dimension of development, expressed by values, social cohesion, solidarity and respect for gender equality: examples of what "social mindedness" means for the European society.

The aim of this work is to briefly present the constitutive elements of the project starting from the main theoretical elements arrives to a brief presentation of the main findings. In fact, it is important to remember that the SMILEY project has been, first of all, a research carried out merging theory and practice, conceptualisation and experience, social research aimed by the will to "modify" the social reality through meaningful action practices[6].

2. THE AIMS

The target of the SMILEY project was to transform the differences that exist between students into a resource rather than a barrier to integration. This target was achieved through an integrated system of "online" and "offline" activities catalysed by an e-learning platform hosting an ERPG (Educational Role-Playing Game) named "YourTown" connecting students and teachers from the partner countries: Italy, Turkey, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom.

Trying to summarize, the starting points of the project were[7]:

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[5] The project was funded under the Lifelong Learnig Programme (project number: 510320-LLP-2010–1-IT-COMENIUS-CMP) Comenius between 2011–2012. All the project outputs and deliverables are downloadable from: http://www.smileyschool.eu/4sch/servlet/MainServlet?wbts:page=core.article.show&id_article=100000000016.

[6] A. Gamuzza, *Dinamiche educative e orientamento sociale fra i giovani europei. Il progetto di ricerca* SMILEY (Social Mindedness In LEarning communitY) [Education Dynamics and Social Orientation among Young Europeans. The SMILEY Research Project. Contribution to the SMILEY Project], "Annali della Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione" (Catania) 2011, No. 10, pp. 133–145.

[7] A. Gamuzza, *Tecnologie digitali e socializzazione a scuola: un fertile connubio in prospettiva sociologica, Contributo teorico al progetto SMILEY* [Digital Technologies and Socialization: a fertile union in sociological perspective. Contribution to the SMILEY project], "Annali della Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione" (Catania) 2012, No. 11, pp. 185–196.

1) to promote the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in order to test an effective conflict-resolution approach preventing exclusion practices in different educational contexts.

2) to encourage students' understanding of social rules. In this context, the students were involved into an engaged learning experience that fosters social and cross-cultural awareness at school and in daily life.

Moreover, the project objectives were modelled on the base of Lifelong Learning Programme aims[8]. In other words, SMILEY project encourages the technology transfer from academic research to the social groups involved into the project (teachers, students, families). Considering these elements the consortium, composed by seven partners, expresses different competences that were necessary in order to guarantee that a complex action-research design was carried out along a two-year activity (2011–2012)[9].

3. THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL MINDEDNESS

The first necessary step of every research project is to precisely define its theoretical range of reference. Bearing in mind these premises, the SMILEY project research design was structured around the concept of social mindedness[10]; its definition can be expressed as follows: *social mindedness is the individual attitude oriented to guarantee, in daily-life interactions, the benefits for individuals involved in social relationships and, on a wider scale, the improvement of the whole context*. In other words, social mindedness indicates the individual capacity to develop a system of values and a positive code of *societal-oriented* behaviours denoting a concept that connects the dynamics of cohesion and social inclusion. According to the operative needs of SMILEY project, the concept of social mindedness "crosses" the main structural aspects of social reality: socialization, family, educational institutions, organizations and groups, membership and social stratification. More in depth,

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[8] Cf. http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/comenius/comenius_en.php.

[9] 1) The Department of Educational Sciences of the University of Catania (Italy); 2) Enigma Interactive (United Kingdom); 3) 4system. The Art of e-Learning (Poland); 4) PMF (Italy); 5) The Kocaeli Provincial Directorate of National Education (Turkey); 6) The Mihai Eminescu National College (Romania) and 7) Gimnazjum nr. 2 im. Adama Asnyka (Poland).

[10] A.M. Leonora, *Social Mindedness – Forma mentis socialis. Dinamiche di relazione e capitale sociale*, Contributo teorico al progetto SMILEY [Social Mindedness. Relational Dynamics and Social Capital. Contribution to the SMILEY Project], "Annali della Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione" (Catania) 2012, No. 11, pp. 142–146.

social mindedness is an *umbrella concept*[11] composed by five dimensions that, in a sociological perspective, nurture and facilitate integration processes:

1) membership – that is the sense of belonging to a holistic context;[12]
2) interdependence – that means the recognition of the interdependence between social actors[13];
3) interactive dynamics – that express the interactive dynamics of the structure of relational networks (social capital)[14];
4) cooperation – that is dynamics of cooperation, in order to reach common goals[15];
5) family habits – that underlines the family's role in socialization and, more widely, inside the educational processes[16].

In order to permit a correct implementation of our theoretical model we have developed and performed a specific training course for the teachers involved into the project (selected by the associated schools) in the five participating countries in order to explain the theoretical articulation of the concept of social mindedness, its implementation into the action-research design, and the e-learning platform functions. The teacher training pack[17] was useful in order to transfer project methods to other teachers in the future. Moreover, one of the targets of the training course was to propose a deep modification of the way the teachers interact with the classroom environment. In a certain sense, the whole project offered a modification of "teaching tongue" oriented to engage students in a very alternative learning experience.

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[11] Leonora, *Social Mindedness – Forma mentis socialis*, op.cit., pp. 146–147.

[12] L.M. Daher, *Giovani identità in transizione. Il ruolo delle appartenenze ai gruppi sociali nella socializzazione alla cooperazione*, Contributo teorico al progetto SMILEY [Young Identities in Transition. The Role of Belonging to Social Groups into the Socialization to Cooperation, Contribution to the SMILEY project] "Annali della Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione" (Catania) 2012, No. 11, pp. 167–183.

[13] G.J. Kaczyński, *Modelli di interdipendenza degli attori sociali e la socializzazione nel contesto familiare,* Contributo teorico al progetto SMILEY [Models of the Interdependence between Social Actors and the Socialization in Family Context. Contribution to the SMILEY Project], "Annali della Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione" (Catania) 2012, No. 11, pp. 151–157.

[14] A.M. Leonora, *Social Mindedness – Forma mentis socialis*, op.cit., pp. 146–150.

[15] Ibidem.

[16] G.J. Kaczyński, *Modelli di interdipendenza*, op.cit., pp. 157–166.

[17] The traininig packs in five languages are downloadable at: http://smileyschool.eu/4sch/servlet/MainServlet? wbts:page=core.article.show&id_article=100000000073, [Access date: 15.12.2013].

If it is true that SMILEY project promotes the use of ICT in order to test a new approach to effective conflict-resolution strategies the originality of SMILEY was based upon its innovative approach. Following a strictly sociological perspective, bullying, as all exclusion practices, was considered as a "product" of the school environment. Despite the typical approach to bullying at school, which concentrates to the individual-psychological dimension of the bully, SMILEY focuses its attention on avoiding that the school environment itself could originate exclusion practices[18]. From a formal point of view, the SMILEY logical framework "overturned" the mainstream of social intervention into the school environment: the attention is now upon the collective dimension of socialization thanks to the active guide of the referring teacher and the engaged interaction into the class. The SMILEY experience was presented as an *interactive social antidote* against exclusion arising. Considering these points, the educational game YourTown, was designed as "the technological core" of the SMILEY Project.

In fact, the SMILEY approach was rooted upon the active "offline" participation of the entire class that, after the game sessions, re-contextualise the events played during the game into "scholastic habitat" thanks to the class debate moderated by the teachers.
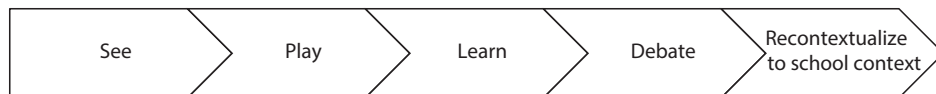

| See | Play | Learn | Debate | Recontextualize to school context |

Figure 1. The YourTown implementation logic

[18] Cf. G.D. Zotti, O.Urpis, *Educational Institutions in the Face of Multiculturalism: Problems and Solutions to Interethnic Violence in Italian Schools* [in:] *Children Voices*, op.cit., pp. 121–169; S.T. Fiske, M. Yamamoto, *Coping with Rejection: Core Social Motives, Across Cultures* [in:] *The Social Outcast: Ostracism, Social Exclusion, Rejection, and Bullying,* K.D.Williams, J.P. Forgas, W. von Hippel (eds.), New York 2005, pp. 185–198; B.K. Weinhold, *Bullying and School Violence: The Tip of the Iceberg,* "The Teacher Educator" 2000, No. 3, pp. 28–33; D. Olweus, S.P. Limber, *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Teacher Guide*, Center City (MN) 2007; D. Olweus, *Bullying at School: What We Know and What We Can Do,* New York 1993; S.P. Limber, *The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program: An Overview of Its Implementation and Research Basis* [in:] *Handbook of School Violence and School Safety: From Research to Practice*, S.R. Jimerson, M.J. Furlong (eds.), Mahwah (NJ) 2006, pp. 293–307; S.R. Jimerson, S.M. Swearer, D.L. Espelage, *Handbook of Bullying in Schools, An International Perspective,* New York 2010.

4. FROM SOCIAL MINDEDNESS TO SMILEY EXPERIENCE: METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

The concept of social mindedness is the *magnifying glass* through which the SMILEY experience can be seen as an action-research[19] based upon a precise theoretical skeleton. The target of the project was to promote the internalisation of pro-social behaviours as "antidote" to exclusion practices; this virtuous dynamic is triggered using ICT through the educational role-playing game (from now onward ERPG) "YourTown".

First of all, the exploratory relational hypothesis under empirical control was the following: social mindedness is linked to the mutual influence of the individual cultural context – expressed by the family habits – the sense of belonging to an holistic context, the relational network of interdependence and the cooperation dynamics.

In fact, the social mindedness dimensions gave essence to the choices of individual action along a continuum that starting from an individual-centred orientation shifts to a collective-centred orientation.

The SMILEY analytical path can be synthetized in the following points:
1) Theoretical conceptualisation;
2) Designing of the game plot;
3) Operationalisation of the concept of SM into game incidents (Mission building);
4) Opening Survey;
5) In-game questions during "YourTown" ERPG;
6) Dialogic re-contextualisation strategy;
7) Final variables collected after the "online" and "offline" sessions.

The focus of our attention was the search for correct equilibrium between a funny game and an action-research approach to engaged learning[20]. In consid-

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[19] M. Fox, P. Martin, G. Green, *Doing Practitioner Research*, London 2007; *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*, P. Reason, H. Bradbury (eds.), London 2001; P. Woods, *Researching the Art of Teaching: Ethnography for Educational Use*, London–New York 1996.

[20] T.M. Connolly, E.A. Boyle, E. MacArthur, T. Hainey, J.M. Boyle, *A Systematic Literature Review of Empirical Evidence on Computer Games and Serious Games*, "Computers & Education" 2012, No. 59, pp. 661–686; V. Guillén-Nieto, M. Aleson-Carbonell, *Serious Games and Learning Effectiveness: The Case of "It's a Deal!"*, "Computers & Education" 2012, No. 58, pp. 435–448; E.D. van der Spek, P. Wouters, H. van Oostendorp, *Code Red: Triage or Cognition-Based Design Rules Enhancing Decision making Training in a Game Environment*, "British Journal of Educational Technology" 2011, No. 42, pp. 441–455; B. Kapralos, M.Hogan, A.I. Pribetic, A. Dubrowski, *Virtual Simulations and Serious Games in a Laptop-Based University: Gauging Faculty and Student*

eration of this, the overall analysis was carried out following a quali-quantitative approach[21] that – thanks to an integrated perspective – allowed comprehending "in depth" the point of view of students involved into the SMILEY experience. The whole SMILEY experience can be considered as an integrated research tool that worked during six analytical moments. After defining the concept (1) the second step was the wording of the storyline (ERPG plot) (2). Starting from these premises, the scientific coordinator opted for creating a digital city[22] – YourTown – where the student-player had to identify twenty-four relevant situations playing the four missions (3) based upon the operationalization of the social mindedness dimensions.

The SMILEY ERPG sequence implied, after the student/player LCMS (Learning Content Management System) registration, an opening survey (4). The inner articulation of the questionnaire was oriented to explore the relational hypothesis under empirical control. Even the opening survey was designed operationalizing the five dimensions of social mindedness. The particular form of some questions that we called "situational"[23] constituted a very significant point of the quantitative research tools. In this kind of question the respondent was placed in a concrete situation and he/she had to choose what kind of behaviour to maintain in front of a turning point. In this way the daily-life experience was placed at the core of the interrogation preparing the respondent for the following phase: the in-game questions.

(5) As anticipated before, there were twenty-four "relevant" incidents hidden in YourTown, six in each mission; There were three types of incidents:
- Negative;
- Positive;
- Subjective.

Into the negative incidents the polarity of the social mindedness dimension was associated to *anti-social minded* behaviour. Conversely, the positive polarity of the social mindedness dimension translated to good practice (*social minded* behaviour*) related to the involved dimension. The subjective incidents were special. In fact,

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Perceptions, "Interactive Technology and Smart Education" 2011, No. 2, pp. 106–120; E.S. Simpson, *Evolution in the Classroom: What Teachers Need to Know about the Video Game Generation*, "TechTrends: Linking Research & Practice to Improve Learning" 2005, No. 49, pp. 17–22.

[21] A. Trobia, *La ricerca sociale quali-quantitativa* [The quali-quantitative social research], Milano 2005.

[22] The four areas of the city are inspired by the building style of the five countries involved in the SMILEY project in respect of different culture and traditions.

[23] For a detailed explanation see the following paragraph.

in these incidents the player had to assess the incident polarity. The incident was not designed upon an "objective" distinction. In order to "find out" these incidents the player had to decide the social meaning of the game situation with a subjective decision[24].

Just to exemplify the inner logic of mission building it seems useful to observe Mission 1 incidents (Tab.1) in which is represented the output of the operationalization of the concept of social mindedness into game incidents.

Table 1. The game incidents in mission 1

Social Mindedness Dimension	Membership	Family habits	Cooperation	Interdependence	Interactive dynamics	Family Habits
Polarity	Positive	Negative	Positive	Positive	Negative	Subjective
Description of incident / Evidence file text	Some boy scouts are collecting money for charity.	A family are having a picnic on the beach; they are causing a lot of litter.	A family is having great fun building a sand castle on the beach together.	There are steps leading to the beach, Johnny is in a wheel-chair; some people offer to help him and Lucy get down onto the beach.	A gang of youths on the pier are drinking alcohol, smoking and spitting they are pointing at Johnny & Lucy.	A woman is sunbathing topless on the beach.
"What do you think?" question 1	How important do you think this incident is?	How serious do you think this incident is?	How important do you think this incident is?	How important do you think this incident is?	How serious is it to help people in situations like this?	How serious do you think this incident is?
"What do you think?" question 2	How often do you see this kind of incident in your daily life?	How often do you see this kind of incident in your daily life?	How often do you see this kind of incident in your daily life?	How often do you see this kind of incident in your daily life?	How often do you see this kind of incident in your daily life?	How often do you see this kind of incident in your daily life?

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[24] The player got points for quick choices adding to the incident folder the "correct" incidents to the file.

Open-ended final question	How do you think this makes Johnny and Lucy feel and why?	How do you think this makes Johnny and Lucy feel and why?	How do you think this makes Johnny and Lucy feel and why?	How do you think this makes Johnny and Lucy feel and why?	How do you think this makes Johnny and Lucy feel and why?	How do you feel about a woman choosing to sunbathe topless?

The second stage of the game, which was accessed after that the player have correctly selected the various situations in YourTown, transported the player into the City Council session in which the exposure of the event details (evidences) the game requires to express the opinion about the importance of selected situations, the rate at which the student observes similar situations in the context of everyday life completed by an open-ended question in order to specify their choices. In other words, the student/player was "forced" to deal with selected incidents during a specific game session in which the player could reflect on the nature of his/her choice. In facts, during the "council meeting phase" of the game the player expresses his evaluation about the relevance of the identified incident providing data, recorded by the learning platform, useful for the game outputs overall interpretation.

The collected data, recorded by the e-learning platform, allow systematically store how students consider the in-game situations and the related frequency in their daily-life.

(6) Sociologically speaking, the proposed path cannot stop at the virtual experience. In fact, and this is a point on which we have focused very carefully, the game and the events depicted in it are re-contextualised within the school environment thanks to the active role of the teacher through a debating stimuli for the classroom debate.

In a certain sense the gamers are "forced" to re-discuss their choices, confronting them during a stimulated debate. The city of YourTown thus becomes the means, by analogy, that allows critical reflection on the school life and the social significance of rules.

We called this process "dialogic re-contextualisation". The mechanism was simple: the game incidents were discussed into the classroom thanks to the active role of the coordinating teacher.

The game and the events are designed, by analogy, within the school environment by teacher of reference through a series of stimuli that activate a discursive dialogical process of re-contextualization within the class, allowing players to review and problematize their own choices, understand the reasons, internalize more clearly the meaning of social mindedness.

Considering this, we propose to the referring teacher a quick guide to the game missions that unveil the city of YourTown as a place of critical reflection on school daily life and the rules that must be respected in the process of individual development.

The 150 involved teachers benefited from the experience gained by running a transnational innovative project. The project involved 4973 students (10–16 years old) into the five partner countries.

This approach was successful because of the active, and engaged, collaboration between students and teachers that reduces the "social cost" of educational contents production and the cost of human tutoring supervision thanks to game-based learning approach. The collaborative model makes e-learning accessible and users feel themselves such active players of the educational process. This was really a crucial point: the ICT edutainment (ERPG) is a tool that cannot substitute real and active debate.

(7) At the end of this phase the players were invited to answer to the final part of the questionnaire. These variables are collected in order to "measure" if the SMILEY experience was useful or not in order to foster critical thinking into the gamers.

5. MAIN RESULTS

The following analysis briefly presents an exploratory interpretation directly linked to the social mindedness dimensions implemented into the analytical route. This analysis is useful in order to describe the inner coherence between the concept of social mindedness and the analytical tools proceeding by the theoretical framework.

5.1 THE SAMPLE

First of all, it is important to describe the main findings related to the composition of the population under analysis. The sample was managed by the learning content management system (from now onwards LCMS). The registered users sample recorded by LCMS up to December 2012 was composed of 4973 users. The internal distribution of the sample (Figure 2) was the following: 41% is represented by Romanian students, the 28% by Turkish students, 19% Polish students, 9% Italian students, and 3% UK students. This internal distribution shows that the involvement into the school activities directly follows the *internal* expertise
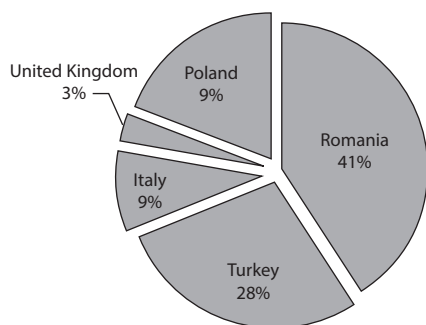
of the consortium. In fact, the Romanian partner benefited of previous experience in e-learning educational projects. The same arguments can be used to interpret the Turkish background.

The Polish situation is peculiar. In fact, even if the quota (19%) was relatively low compared with the Romanian and Turkish component, in this context the consortium received a very interesting feedback. In this country the SMILEY project was implemented both in schools and socio-therapeutic communities. In this way, it is possible to argue that SMILEY approach could be replicated "outside" the school environment. This situation was useful even in considering the fact that the choice of a city setting for the educational game – YourTown – and the dialogic re-contextualisation strategy jointly permit to apply the SMILEY methodology outside the school environment. The strategic importance of this *flexibility* will be better explained in the following of our work.

The gender distribution shows that the 54% of the sample is composed of females and the remaining 46% is composed by males.

Taking into consideration the parents' educational level (Figure 3) the findings reproduce the tendency in educational attainment in Europe. The higher levels of educational qualification were in correspondence of women in all countries. These insights were "mediated" by the knowledge of students about the parents' educational qualification.
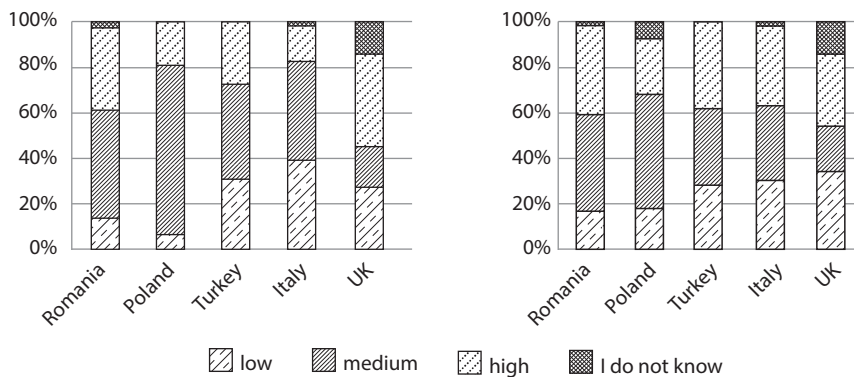

Figure 2. Country of Origin (%)

Figure 3. Education Father (left) and Mother (right) (%)

5.2 MEMBERSHIP

The membership dimension was gathered by two situational questions. The first question was about the individual propensity to help a subject similar to the respondent in a daily life situation (Figure 4).
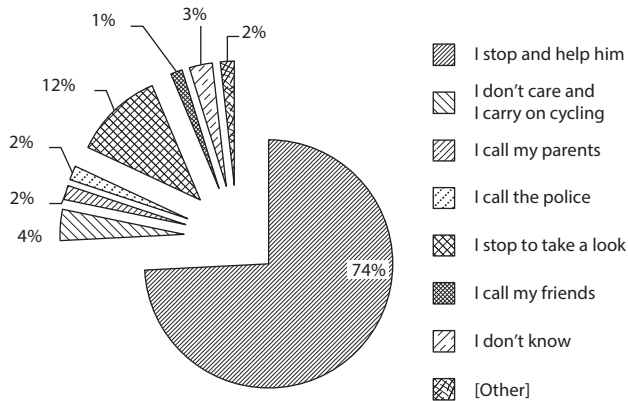

Figure 4. Propensity to help peer in a daily life situation (%)

Question: *«During a bike ride around the city you see a boy as you who has fallen off his bike and skinned his knee. What do you do?»*

The 74% of the answers are concentrated upon the option "I stop and help him". All the other answer options appears to be as residual (under 5% of respondents). Beyond this threshold (12%) there was the "I stop and take a look" option that represented, in a certain sense, a controversial answer stressing upon the indifference to the generalized other. This percentage is not insignificant: several bullying phenomena are based upon the indifference for the victim. In this direction, the *opposite* option "I do not care and I carry on cycling" is represented only by the 4% of respondents. Even if this percentage seems to be negligible, any behaviour based upon indifference and not-participatory disposition contributes to foster social exclusion and marginalisation from the context.

Moreover, this interpretation is confirmed by the close observation of the second situational question presented into the opening survey. Even in this case, related to propensity to normative behaviour in daily life, the respondents were placed in front of a dichotomy: individualistic interests versus generalised other interests.

The membership dynamics in relation with the context were analysed through the trust levels connected with the interactive circles in which the respondent was

placed. In this case, the higher levels of trust were placed in correspondence of the subject close interactional circles: the family. The teachers personified a high-trust social category. The peer group and the institutional figures represented the most problematic categories. These findings confirmed what we have seen thanks to the situational questions: the levels of membership related to the context, appeared as a problematic dimension for the respondents. The findings connected to membership recorded by LCMS during YourTown game sessions underlined a different tendency. In fact, both positive and negative incidents were detected clearly by the students/ players; in this way, they demonstrated the awareness of social rules about normative social behaviour. The players correctly identified the polarity of the incidents considering as important the positive items and serious the negative ones.

Analysing the final questions, after the classroom debate (Figure 5) moderated by the referring teacher, the students/players showed an evident increasing rate of critical consciousness. As outlined before, the respondents demonstrate the knowledge of social rules even if there are some contradictory results regarding the concrete application of these rules in daily life. The membership items unveil a generalized individualism confirming the tendencies highlighted into the previous analytical steps.
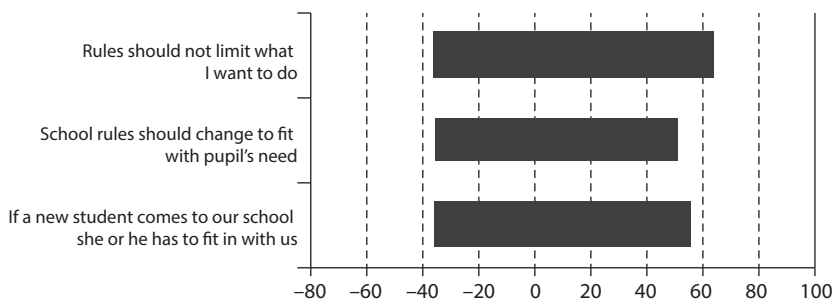

Figure 5. Membership items after the classroom debate (consolidated %)

5.3 INTERDEPENDENCE

The second analytical dimension of the concept of social mindedness focused on the interdependence between social actors. As we have seen before, most of such contacts are of a transient, short-lived nature. This analytical focus of the concept of social mindedness was operationalized in two perspectives: micro (individual) and macro (institutional).

The micro perspective was investigated through the favourite characteristics owned by a generalized friend (Figure 6): the most important characteristic is sincerity followed by fun. This tendency confirmed that reciprocity is based upon the mutual recognition of similarities.

The macro level of interactive dynamics was condensed into the question about the perceived function of the educational institution.
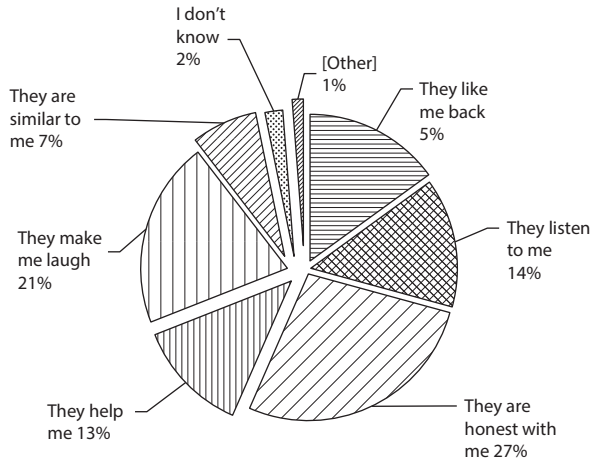

Figure 6. Opinion about favourite friends' characteristics (%)
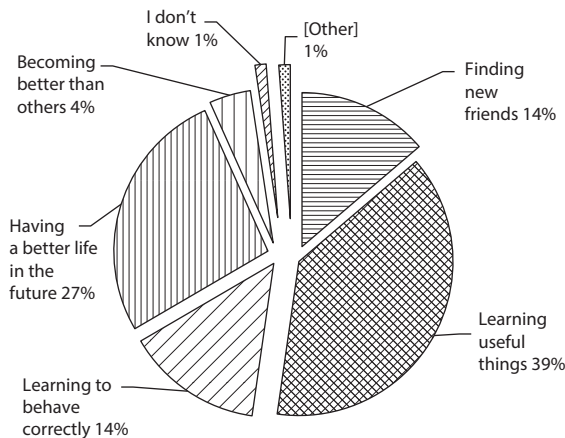Question: *«What do you like about your friends?»*

Figure 7. Opinion about perceived institutional function (%)
Question: *«In your opinion, school is useful for…»*

Taking a look to these insights the majority of students (39%) underlined the relevance of a "practical learning experience" that fully combines knowledge of notions and social competences in order to translate knowledge into daily life experience. On the other side, the 27% of respondents underline the strategic role of the school for social mobility and personal achievement. Only the 14% requires the typical "durkheimian" function that linked education and social integration ("*learning to behave correctly*").

The findings connected to interdependence recorded by LCMS during Your-Town game session even in this case put under attention problematic social rule internalization. The final questions (after the re-contextualising debate in classroom) for interdependence dimension unveiled some interlocutory results (Figure 8). In fact, the individualistic attitude is always present for all the considered items. For example, the item *"When I know that I'm right, I don't have to ask other people"* reveals a division (49% disagree vs 51% agree) underlining a problematic de-codification of the personal perception. In spite of the previous statement about social rule awareness, the respondents highlight an opposition towards the others needs and interests. This evidence reveals a certain *distance* between the declared principles of behaviour (e.g. *It is always important to consider other people's point of view)* and the degree of accordance with the opposite principle (e.g. *When I know that I'm right, I don't have to ask other people*).
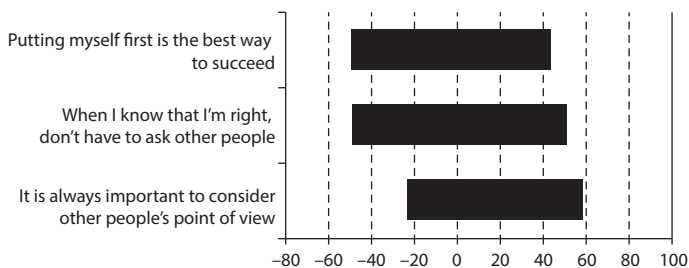

Figure 8. Opinion about perceived institutional function (%)
Question: *«In your opinion, school is useful for…»*

5.4 INTERACTIVE DYNAMICS AND COOPERATION

The analysis of findings about interactive dynamics and cooperation confirm the two levels of problematization about social cohesion and individual pro-social behaviour in continuity with the membership dimension. It is possible to argue

the existence of a distance between the social rules awareness and the application of those social rules in daily-life situations.

During the opening survey, the students were stimulated to express their opinion about the preferred interactive contexts stressing upon the nature of relationship they prefer. This question was expressively designed to investigate the peculiar interactional characteristics of the peer group represented by the classmates. Taking into consideration the most significant answers, there are three main interactional clusters: entertainment, confidential and institutional.

This tendency is partially confirmed by the analysis of cooperation questions (Figure 9) that highlight the relevance of primary groups (parents, 33% and the best friend, 35%) as the most satisfying interactive contexts. The 42% of respondents confirm that the friend ideal type is associated with the instrumental function of friendship (help). This peculiarity is combined to a similar way of thinking (18%) and emotional support (15%).

During the game sessions, the LCMS platform recorded very interesting data connected with interactive dynamics and cooperation items. Even in this case, there is a clear internalisation of social rules both for positive and negative items.
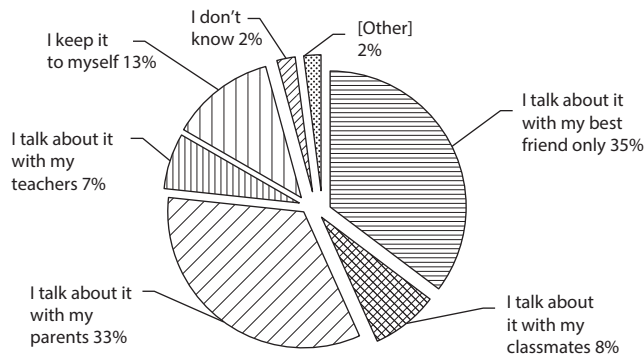

Figure 9. Opinion about help request relationships (%)
Question: «*When you are in trouble what do you do?*»

After the classroom debate (Figure 10) moderated by the referring teacher the items linked to the abovementioned dimensions showed different outcomes both in cooperation and interactive dynamics items. In fact, the individualistic character of relationship appears to be a decisive criterion of decision in daily life situations. The most evident example in this direction is illustrated by the option "*Working on your own is better than working together as a team*". In this case the level

of agreement with this statement is the 54% but the 46% that disagree is really significant. This proportion is the same in the case of interactive dynamic item "*To reach a goal all methods are allowed*" demonstrating that the personal achievement overcome the general awareness of social rules and social responsibility.
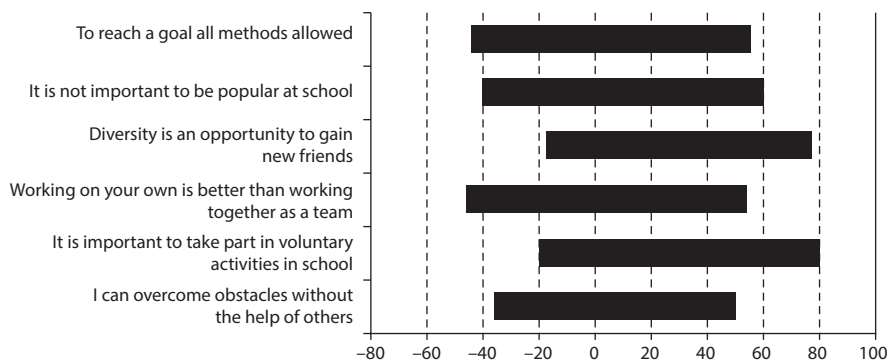

Figure 10. Interactive Dynamics and Cooperation items after the classroom debate (consolidated %)

5.5 FAMILY HABITS

The last considered dimension of the social mindedness concept is family habits. This dimension is very important because it highlights the link between institutional socialization and primary socialization with regard to the internalisation of social rules in connection to the cultural system (Figure 11). The family appears as the first context that combines the in-group interests with the societal ones. During the opening survey, before playing YourTown, the most evident tendency was represented by the acceptance of the set of values handed down by the familiar context summarized by the answer option "*we usually think the same way*" (50%). Furthermore, another significant finding is embodied by the individualistic orientation characterised by the two most relevant alternative options to family habits conformity: the absence of significant relationships (15%) or a residual communicative need with the familiar circle (17%).

These insights are confirmed into the analysis of in-game questions. Even in this case the individualistic orientation appears to be the determinant factor.

After the dialogic re-contextualisation phase, the items connected to family habits highlights a tangible ability in realising a personal rule elaboration in daily life. Even in this case the individualistic component is predominant. In fact, as we
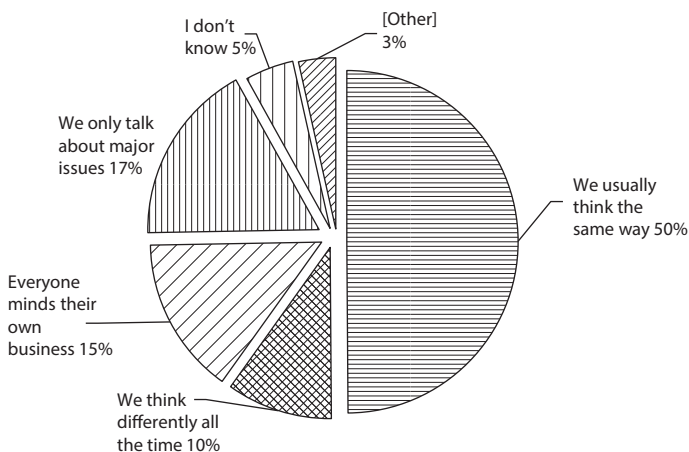
Figure 11. Opinion about familiar relationship (%)

Question: «In family life, what is your relationship with your parents?»

can see (Figure 12) there is a huge agreement towards cultural familiar environment embodied into the statement "*the rules that I learned at home are always right*" and strengthened in personal beliefs "*it is important for me to stay true to my beliefs, even if people sneer at me*".

In conclusion, family habits dimension appear as a constitutive essential element of social mindedness concept. As argued before, family habits have a strong impact in youth socialization but the family cultural world in linked, and in a certain sense shaped, to the broader socio-cultural context. The societal cultural milieu determines the way culture is transmitted from one generation to another.
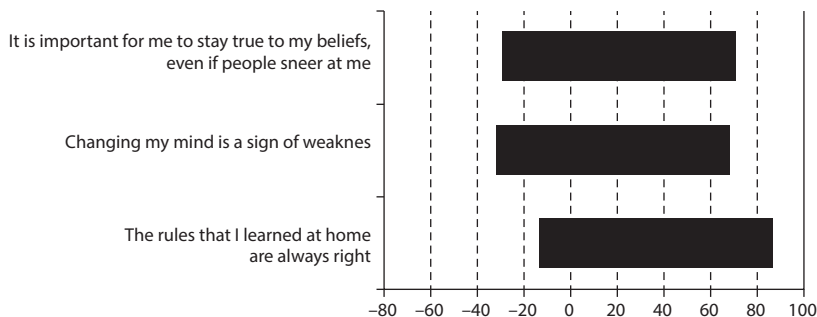

Figure 12. Family Habits items after the classroom debate (consolidated %)

6. CONCLUSIONS

Trying to sum up the whole research findings, SMILEY project shed a light upon some interesting remarks in order to better understand the youth reality both into the school and daily life.

In fact, even if the respect for the *others* and the recognition of diversity as a value were always declared by the students as a sort of "leading principle", the dialogic re-contextualization phase (and the final questionnaire) showed that this declared disposition is not *coherent in action*: the social desirability bias is always in the background. The respondents fully recognize positive and negative situations but, as showed by the analysis of the final variables collected after the dialogic re-contextualisation phase, they affirmed the possibility to *negotiate* social rules in order to achieve individual targets. This attitude seems to indicate a flexibility into the process of interpretation/internalization of the public dimension of social cohesion. Moreover, these remarks assume a particular importance in the intercultural context, characterized by a wide range of possible, alternative choices of action.

At this point it seems useful to split our exploratory conclusions along three main directions: a) the students perspective, b) the teacher contribution and c) the parental involvement.

    a) YourTown was considered by students as an amazing and participatory learning experience; amazing because the game allows to *study* in a *divergent* way inside the class the social environment; participatory because, through the re-contextualization debate, the students were *forced* to confront their own point of view with the others. The main consequence of this positive experience is the fact that they ask for game expansions: more missions and more incidents to discover and to deal with.

    b) The leading role accorded to teachers by SMILEY fostered their responsibility and centrality into the educational experience: not a *passive* mean but an *active* actor[25]. This tendency was confirmed by the explicit request of additional materials – as an exercise book explicitly designed to create a complete training experience for curricular activities – with the purpose of *transforming* the SMILEY project into a curricular and resident activity.

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[25] For a comprehensive image of teachers' feedback to SMLEY project please refer to the e-journal section of the project website: http://www.smileyschool.eu/4sch/servlet/MainServlet?wbts:page=core. article. blog:show&id_category=100000000004&type=0&wbts:ai=changeRole&role=103.

c) In regards to the parental involvement into the project it is important to underline: the appreciation of the SMILEY general framework, the recognition of the value of a safe virtual environment for their children, the building of a positive connection between students and teachers thanks to the game and a need of participation in the virtual learning experience.

In conclusion , SMILEY "latent" function in educational process was much more important that the manifest one. A positive triangulation into the learning contest seems to be the winning factor for a successful learning experience in which appraise a positive and constitutive link between school, family and creative personality of the student.

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