



## Summary

# **Intergenerational dialogue – communication between young people and parents**

The inspiration for this publication was our ever-changing reality, its unavoidable influence on the form of the modern-day family, its members and the relations between them. The verbal communication forms used by those participating in a given culture are an indicator of their needs, the way they perceive reality, how they convey the individual's identity, which points towards certain trends and directions in which the values of a particular culture may develop. Dialogue as a form of communication, serves to present the reality regarding subjects, characteristics, properties, activities and more abstract concepts, which allow people to express themselves, convey information about their needs, observations and values; this is a way to express, forge and evaluate their relationships. Forms of communication are shaped within families and through interpersonal contacts from the very first years. The ways we understand others and communicate are often inherited from parents, from the examples they set. However, during adolescence, how the aspect of communication is experienced is to a significant degree an effect of an individual's wider exploration of their social environment – lending giving an identity dimension to one's own narrative. Young people's communication takes on meaning by defining their role in their social group. They begin to create linguistic specifications appropriate for a particular peer group, which give a particular community characteristic forms of expression, allowing individuals to forge closer relations. Young people introduce changes into their family system by means of their communication regarding their needs and establishing relations with their parents through the use of verbal constructs the latter do not understand. In this way, a new quality is created in intergenerational relations in the family.

This publication is an attempt to show the changes occurring in family life in terms of the relations between young people and their parents through communication. It is significant that this publication seeks to define the youth of today in the context of their dialogue with their parents.

It is divided into three parts: theoretical, methodological, which refers to the research assumptions, and finally, the findings.

The theoretical part includes a description of the young generation from the psychological and social perspective, the aim of which is to indicate those aspects that show young people as being entangled in an array of changes stemming from group membership created in postmodern culture. This theoretical perspective attempts to provide a definition of the term 'generation' understood over time and an interdisciplinary approach to it, which

balances between psychology, sociology and philosophy. I regard this generation as a collection of individuals who, during their maturation, were shaped by social models, cultural, economic and political circumstances. My assumption is that these are people belonging to a given generation and can not belong to another, which induced me to pay attention to particular present this group with the focus on particular indications of self-identification.

I assumed that the research programme would provide a description of the younger generation's self-identification in their relations with parents. Drawing on W. Wrzesień's work, I acknowledged the 'set of factors located in time' of youth culture as identification characteristics of young people, including: norms, values, patterns, models, sets of signs and symbols, which, depending on the situation, might together or in part influence opinions, attitudes and actions. These features go on to create complex structures responsible for differentiating such areas of individuals' activity as work, free time, participation in culture, relations between generations and fashion<sup>1</sup>. In accordance with these assumptions stemming from the specific nature of the culture in which young people participate, and the factors that determine and condition intergenerational dialogues, I indicate those areas which constitute a timeless value in young people's relations and a significant indicator for both the practice and theoretical perspectives of contemporary pedagogy.

Chapter Two deals with theories of interpersonal communication, with particular focus on those which reveal the interactive nature of conversation. I also show areas related to non-verbal communication as an essential component of the communication process, as well as barriers and interference in communication that have a significant influence on the attempts made by young people and their parents to understand each other. Chapter Two closes with a sub-chapter on the specific nature of intergenerational dialogue that points to important theoretical conclusions regarding dialogue and communication essential to creating the research process.

Chapter Three takes something of an exploratory and deductive approach, which presents the research subject in its wider context and by points to intergenerational relationships, illustrates the specificity of the parents' generation, changes occurring in the family today, and in the systemic view of family communication. The problems generated in relationships between the younger generation and their parents stem from the way both generations function in their separate 'sub-worlds'; they may also originate from the need to relate to intergenerational messages that function in a given family and around which each and every family develops its own story. This discussion closes Chapter Three.

Chapter Four contains the methodological assumptions consistently underpinning the research process. This work has the following aims: distinguishing young people's characteristics in terms of the generation's self-identification; identifying the factors that determine the nature of communication between the younger generation and their parents; examining young people's opinions and evaluations of their families; distinguishing the scope of content, form and rules for young people's conversations with their parents; uncovering the causes of family communication difficulties between young people and their parents, as well as the factors supporting successful communication; defining the predominant types of dialogue in intergenerational relations and identifying the properties

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<sup>1</sup> W. Wrzesień, *Pokoleniowość współczesnej polskiej młodzieży*, „Władza Sądzenia” 2015, no. 7, pp. 37-55.

characteristic of particular kinds of dialogue. The results of this research show how young people perceive communication with their parents.

Chapter Five verifies the research hypotheses stated in the methodological part and provides a conclusion to the theoretical inquiry. Socio-demographic characteristics of young respondents are presented, along with their generational self-identification, and the rules, forms and content of their conversations with parents. I present the determinants, disruptions and barriers of communication with parents from young people's perspective, and also the causes of conflicts and ways young people seek to solve them. A crucial element of this research was to show how young people evaluate the family relations in the following areas: communication, coherence, identity and autonomy.

Relations with parents illustrated through the specificity of the discourse in interpersonal, family communication express the developmental tendencies and identification in the youth of today, but also show young people's needs as manifested in their rebellious attitude to their parents and the world. By distinguishing the determinants of proper communication – matter-of-fact, supportive and beneficial for the proper development of each family member – it is possible to discern the significant, constructive latent potential in today's young people, and consequently, to evaluate the model of intergenerational relations in families as satisfying or aiming to disintegrate the family system.

My reflections on the research conducted led to my distinguishing those aspects of intergenerational dialogue which make up a range of indicators of particular specificity of types of dialogues occurring in the respondents' homes; these include valuable and beneficial dialogue, surface dialogue and negative dialogue.

*Translated by Rob Pagett*