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#FEiC

Media narratives as a discussion trigger for supporting a healthy attitude towards rejection in adolescence intimate relationships



Master Thesis
Delft, July 2020

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Media narratives as a discussion trigger for
supporting a healthy attitude towards rejection
in adolescence intimate relationships

Abstract

Adolescence is a crucial development stage where both biological and psychological changes take place. Among the various transformations and developments, the discovery of sexuality and intimacy has an important role, especially from sixteen to nineteen years old. The construction of sexual identity is a significant bio-psycho-social development (Kar, 2015), however in Italy almost half of the teenagers have experienced a form of violence from their partners during High School ranging from insults to physical aggression (Romito, 2013).

The literature agrees that experiencing rejection is a common trigger of aggression with significant repercussions of mental and physical health. Therefore to understand better the phenomenon, its causes and consequences, a combination of desk research and field research was carried out. The results indicated that rejection is lived on an ego level touching the pride of people and therefore it is considered a taboo with strong effects on different levels of society. Based on this analysis, to improve the current situation, it was chosen to focus on the community level by triggering open conversation about rejection. All these insights gained from the analysis were presented to a team of experts and teenagers. Their feedback was helpful to understand the fundamental characteristics that the final design should have to trigger meaningful conversation around the experience of rejection.

To discuss how media portrays rejection #FEIC is introduced. #FEIC is a service that provides teenagers with a showcase of media narratives of rejection and interactive activities. The showcase aims to get the teenagers familiar with the idea of media narratives, while the goal of the activities is to make them experiment with them. In the current development, one activity is designed and deepened to use media narratives as a trigger to talk about how society deals with rejection and how that affects teenagers and their thinking. Different variations of the activity were tested to understand what type of interactions were triggering more discussions. Moreover, to evaluate the overall experience and design features, the full service was presented to the experts through in-depth interviews. The feedback gained demonstrated that the use of media is a successful way to trigger meaningful discussion around rejection. The dialogue generated from the #FEIC activity was defined as “different” from what teenagers were used to discussing, “stimulating”, and “useful” to understand better the conditioning behind their judgment.

Thesis structure

The report presents seven chapters. Each section has a similar structure: first, a brief introduction is provided, then, research and design activities are described. Subsequently, the outputs are reported and discussed, and to conclude, the chapters give a summary with key takeaways. The chapters content is as follows:

1 | The project

This chapter provides an introduction to the project explaining the context, the starting point and the approach used to deliver the final design.

2 | Discover

The chapter aims to explain all research activities conducted to gain knowledge about the context and their results.

3 | Define

In this chapter, the results of the previous section are analyzed to create a comprehensive model to not only understand the context, but to decide the angle of intervention.

4 | Design statement

The chapter presents the chosen angle by setting the design goal and interaction vision.

5 | Develop

In this chapter, iterations on the design are reported concluding with the design requirements.

6 | #FEIC

The chapters shows and explains the final output, its characteristics, structure and the envisioned experience with it.

7 | Evaluate

In this chapter, the feedback collected in the evaluation activity is reported and analyzed to iterate on the final design.

8 | Conclude

To finalise, this chapter answer to the main research questions and reflect on the final output and the design process.

Glossary

Rejection

The act of saying or receiving a no. The action involves two people and it refers to a specific activity/action.

Sentimental relationship

Any type of relationship that involves romantic feelings, attraction or desire.

Sexual education

The journey to learn about the cognitive, emotional, social, interactive and physical aspects of sexuality (WHO, 2010).

Healthy reaction (to rejection)

A person who reacts healthily to rejection can recognise the emotions they are feeling, accept and manage them without hurting others or themselves.

Context

The surroundings and circumstances around an event, in this case, rejection in romantic relationships.

Teenagers or adolescents

A young person from fourteen to nineteen years old. This elaborate focus on late adolescents from sixteen to nineteen years old.

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The project

In this chapter, a general introduction of the project and its stages is given. First, the context and problem are introduced to provide background information. Secondly, the chapter presents the assignment and the design approach followed throughout the project.

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1.1 | Introduction

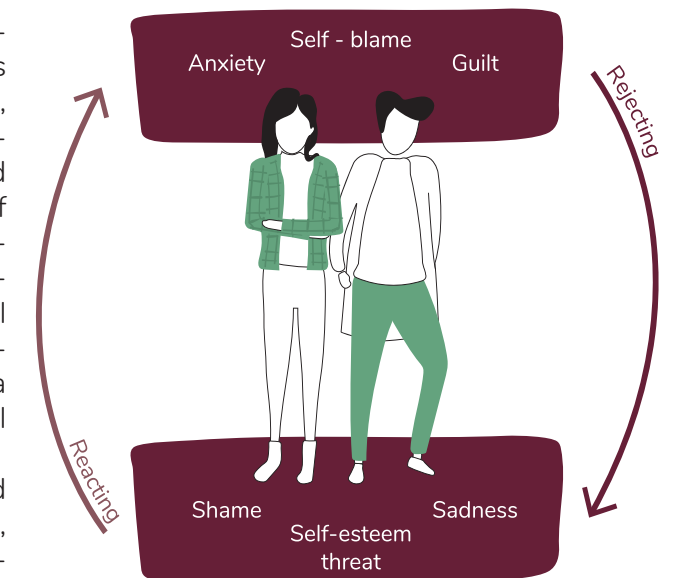
Adolescence is characterized by biological growth and a social role shifting. In particular, older adolescence (from the age of 16 to 20 years old) is marked by the exploration of sexuality and intimate relationships (Sawyer, 2018). Although this discovery should be exciting and joyful, in Italy, 35% of males and 43% of females had experienced some form of intimate psychological, physical and sexual violence from their partner during high school. Nevertheless, adolescent girls experienced significantly higher levels and more severe episodes of violence than men (Romito, 2013).

Intimate partner violence (IPV) and Intimate partner sexual violence (IPSV) among teenagers are worrying phenomena, linked to violence in adult relationships (Gómez, 2010) and associated with multiple negative effects both on victim's physical, sexual and mental health (Olympics, 2016).

Multiple studies found a strong link between rejection and aggression towards the rejector (Woerner 2018, Browns 2012, Baumeister 1993). Refuse, especially in intimate relationships, can be experienced as a threat to self-esteem, and a source of shame and frustration for the missed fulfilment of desire. Moreover, it can be interpreted as a permanent signal of lost sexual appeal or love from the rejector. As a consequence, violent reactions could be seen as a means to obtain revenge or restore control (Browns, 2012).

On the other hand, refusing someone could be problematic as well. It may cause guilt, discomfort and anxiety for the other reaction (Baumeister, 1993). These feelings can result in avoiding a confrontation or lying to the other with the risk of triggering a stronger response.

Concerning the societal level, cultural beliefs and strict gender stereotypes could enhance unhealthy attitudes around rejection. Furthermore, Italy is one of the few European countries without mandatory sexual and sentimental education at school, making it harder for teenagers to recognize unhealthy behaviours and develop critical lenses (Beaumont, 2013).



1. Rejection vicious cycle

Therefore, this graduation project wishes to pave the way for a better sexual and sentimental education for Italian teenagers. In particular, it focuses on rejection in romantic relationships and the media narrative around it. The project aims to give tools to detect false narratives about rejection by the media and use them as a trigger to start a discussion.

In the following paragraphs, the meaning attributed to rejection and sentimental relationships in this thesis are explained.

Rejection

With rejection, in this project, is intended the act of denial, refusal of someone or an action with the person. In a romantic context, it can mean a no to an activity such as going out for a date, having sex, stop replying to texts or to the person itself such as breaking up. All options are included when talking about rejection. Moreover, both the rejector, who says no and the rejected, who receive the no, are considered. When speaking about “managing” or “experiencing” the rejection, both parts are studied and taken into account.

Sentimental relationship

As rejection, sentimental or romantic relationships is a broad term. In this project, it is considered a sentimental relationship a rapport that involves attraction or any romantic feelings. It is important to mention that the relationship considered in this project involves only two people. Moreover, the majority of the literature reviewed and the adolescents’ experience refer to a heterosexual couple. Nevertheless, the project aims to be inclusive of all sexualities and genders.

1.2 | Assignment

The project aims to understand the meaning of rejection for teenagers, its implications and consequently to develop a solution that can contribute to easing the current situation. To guide the design process in pursuing the aim, two main research questions are formulated:

How do Italian teenagers and their support-system manage rejection?

What could help Italian teenagers and their support-system in managing healthier rejection?

In order to answer the research questions, the following design assignment is created: “Create a support to deal with rejection positively and healthily for teenagers living in Milan that are discovering intimate relationships”.

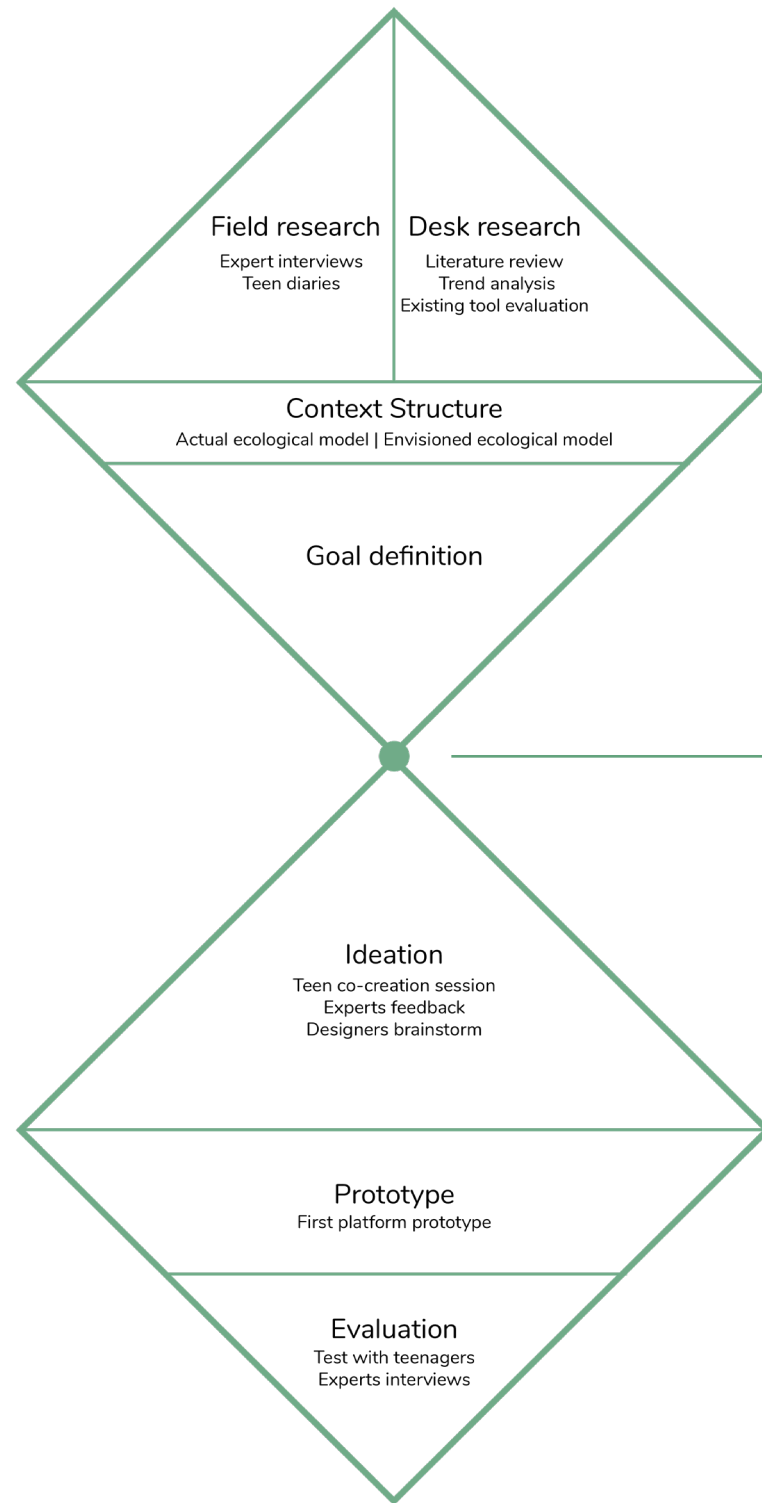
1.3 | Approach

The project is developed using the Double Diamond design approach in combination with the Social Design Implication (SID).

The Double Diamond approach was based on the model created by the Design Council (Design Council, 2015). The model presents four different stages: Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver. Each phase has a diverging or converging objective, to enable the designer to explore the issue widely and then to narrow down the scope of action.

The Social Design Implication method derives from the Vision in Product design approach (ViP) developed by Paul Hekkert and Matthijs van Dijk (Hekkert, 2011). It consists of four stages: Debriefing, Anticipating the future, Goal setting and Developing the intervention. Each phase has specific steps aimed to consider not only singular users but communities and how the solution could be inserted within the community and the external world.

The integration of the two methodologies is executed as the figure 2 shows, and a detailed explanation of each step will follow.



Discover

In the first part, the context is explored to understand the principal elements and dynamics. Desk research (literature research, trend analysis, existing resources evaluation) and field research (expert interviews, teenager diaries) are carried out to construct ground knowledge, debrief the assignment and define the main context factors to anticipate the future scenario.

Define

In the Define stage, the information gained previously is analyzed and transformed into a complete context structure. The structure is used to highlight the desired behaviour supported by the design and define the goal.

Develop

In the developing phase, the focus is on iterating on the idea and its interaction. Co-creation sessions and fast prototyping techniques are used to ideate different directions, pursue one, and enrich it.

Deliver

In the final stage, Deliver, the final design is explained and validated. Next to that, the initial research questions are answered, and the project limitations and recommendations are discussed.

2. Double Diamond & SID

1.4 | Main Takeaways

Project goal

The final goal of the project is to contribute to the sexual and sentimental health of Italian teenagers. In particular, the focus is on how to trigger a healthier reaction to rejection.

Multidisciplinary approach

The experience of rejection is influenced by different factors such as the family environment, previous experience, type of friends and school education. All these aspects make the problem broad and complex. Therefore a multidisciplinary approach is needed.

Aggression

Different literature linked rejection as a trigger for physical or verbal aggression. The offensive can be seen as a way to gain control of the situation, diminish the source of humiliation or incapacity in managing intense emotions.

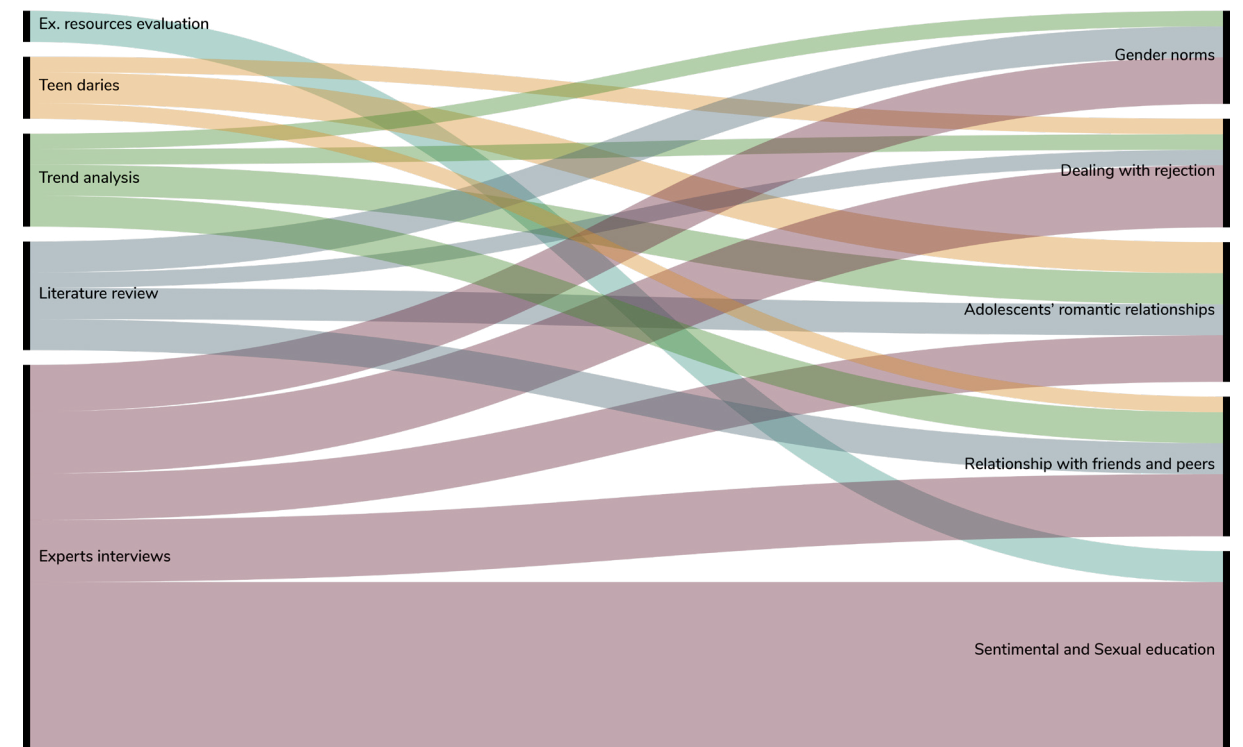
Discover

The Discover chapter aims to illustrate all activities done to explore the context and the insights gained by its analysis. In the beginning, the methodologies used are explained. Following, in the result session are illustrated five different areas of relevance with different insights from the activities. While in the context factors section, the insights from the areas are clustered and interpreted to bring new perspectives. The chapter ends with the main conclusion and take-aways.

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2.1 | Introduction

The starting point of analyzing rejection in adolescents' romantic relationships is broad and considers different societal levels. To better frame the context and discover its dynamics, various activities were carried out. Each activity contributed to answering one or more research questions. The following graph shows the relationship between the areas investigated and the activities used for the research. For more details about the contribution of each research activity, it is possible to consult Appendix B.



3. Alluvial graph research activities

2.2 | Methodology

In total, four activities were carried out. A mix of desk research and field research was used to vary the insights and allow multiple perspectives in the answers. The following paragraphs illustrate the methods and procedure used for each activity.

Literature review

The literature review intends to provide a first understanding of the context and construct ground knowledge of the main themes. All the literature was researched on Google Scholar. The main criteria used for the selection were: the date of publishing and the place where the study took place. Literature from 2016 was preferred since the topic is related to social norms, and they could change over time. Concerning the place, a focus on the Italian context was favoured.

Trend analysis

To amplify the perspective given by the literature review and have a better understanding of how cultural beliefs are changing, trend reports and blogs were analyzed. The selection of the source was based on reliability, selecting influential design studios or sources focused on trend scouting, and the level of specificity preferring behavioural and general societal trends instead of field-specific ones.

Existing tools evaluation

After outlining the first part of the current situation, it was interesting to understand what products and services were already on the market to improve the management of rejection or teen dating in general. To look for resources, Google was the main search engine, besides resource databases such as SALTO Youth. To be included in the selection, resources needed to address one of the following topics: sexual education, sentimental education, and dating violence prevention. In total, nineteen tools were analyzed highlighting their goal, target and modalities as it is visible in Appendix D.

Teenager diaries

Parallel with the experts' interview, a study was done to involve teenagers and get their perspective, wishes and needs. The study consisted of the daily filling of a diary. Every day for five days in a row, teenagers completed one activity about the topic ranging from describing their ideal date to filling a timeline with their rejection experience. An example is shown in Appendix E.

Experts interviews

After creating a good first understanding of the context and its dynamics with the desk research, it was important to enrich the comprehension of the topic with experts' contributions. As methodology, semi-structured interviews were used to set a track, but at the same time leave space for divagation. The structure of the interview was the same for each expert: first some general questions as warm-up, then the main section with specific questions or exercises and finally the last part focused on thinking together on possible solutions. In order to analyse the domain of the rejection with different lenses, a heterogeneous team was created.



4 Parents

The interviews with parents mainly aimed to enrich the context of family by understanding their parenting style and if/how topics such as rejection, consent and in general sexual and sentimental education were addressed.



3 Sexologists

Interviewing three different sexologists was helpful to define how teenagers manage rejection on the individual level: what they feel, how that affects their development and behaviours and how it is possible to promote a healthy reaction.



2 Sociologists

Two sociologists were interviewed to have a macro perspective on the topic and therefore enrich the societal picture. In particular, the interviews focused on how teenagers' gender identity influences their behaviour and the reaction to rejection. Moreover, it was interesting to discuss how to promote healthy attitudes towards rejection on a systemic level.

1 Social worker

To take into account other contexts beside the traditional family and the schools, a social worker from a teenager community was interviewed. The community is a mixed genders community for adolescents from twelve to sixteen years old removed from their familiar context because it is considered not suitable. The social worker contribution was important to take into account more uncommon realities and understand the role of educators and family on teenagers' wellbeing.



2 Peer educators

In Lombardy (North Italy) the Local Health Unit created a program running for ten years called "Educazione tra Pari" (Peer to peer education). In this program, few students are selected on voluntary base and trained by professionals educators on three topics: bullsim, drug addictions and sex education. After tutoring, the students teach a yearly class to first-year students. The interviews with two former peer educators aimed to understand better the program, its focus and modalities.



2 Researchers

To understand how other projects related to rejection and consent and worked with adolescents two researchers from the project Me&You&Everyone were interviewed. The project was a European project aiming to start a dialogue between teenagers about gender violence. The interviews were important to acquire their perspective on the problem, enhance the possibilities of intervention in the community domain, and to gain insights on how to involve effectively with adolescents.



2.3 | Areas of relevance

All the insights collected through the different design activities were clustered in five different areas of relevance following the research questions division: Adolescent romantic Relationship, Gender norms, Dealing with rejection, Relationship with friends and peers and Sentimental and Sexual education.

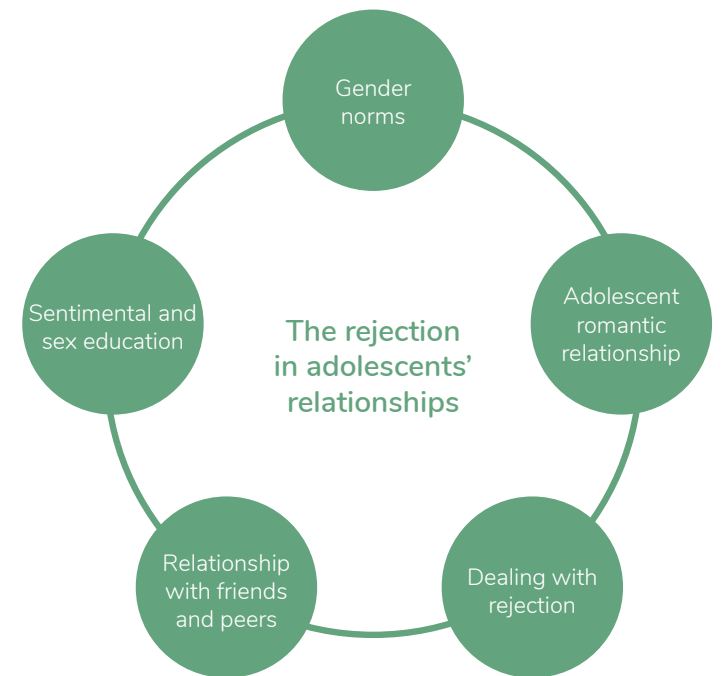
Adolescent romantic relationships presents the characteristic of teenagers' love stories and their meaning. Moreover, it highlights how these characteristics are changing and how they could evolve in the future.

Gender norms investigates how the assigned gender influences teenagers' identity, behaviours and consequently reaction to rejection. In addition to that, it explores how gender stereotypes are interpreted and managed by teenagers.

Dealing with rejection gathers all insights about how teenagers deal with a "No", what is the meaning and effect for them and how different people around them could help adolescents in dealing with it.

In **Relationship with friends and peers** is presented how the rapport with other adolescents influences the development of teenagers and their love stories.

Finally, in **Sentimental and Sexual education** is explained how the environments around teenagers address the topic and how it should be addressed according to the experts. Moreover, the influences of the current situation on teenagers are analysed.



4. Areas of relevance

Adolescent romantic relationships

What are the main characteristics of adolescence relationships?
What is the meaning of a relationship for adolescents?
How sentimental relationships are evolving?
What is the role of the media in teenagers' love stories?

One of the aspects that characterized adolescence is the increase in desire for intimate relationships (Shulman, 2001). Romance starts being a relevant factor, and its importance is reflected in the media consumed by adolescents such as music, films and tv series. Although the increasing relevance, intimate relationships in teenagers present different characteristics from the one in adulthood. Various studies found that for teenagers companionship was the most important aspect, while young adults place more value in intimacy and support (Van Ouytsel, 2019). Relationships are seen as a place for experimenting and having fun characterized by enthusiasm rather than a space for personal growth and connection.

In a relationship one of the most important things is that we spent some fun times together and we do nice things like go shopping or to the cinema -Participant (16 years-old)

adulthood. Various studies found that for teenagers companionship was the most important aspect, while young adults place more value in intimacy and support (Van Ouytsel, 2019). Relationships

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5. Couple in Rome

Phases in adolescents' romantic relationships

Connolly and Goldberg (1999) recognized four phases of teenage heterosexual relationships that show the changes in quality and type of rapport. In the beginning, there is the infatuation stage where passion and physical attraction are central, but there is no actual interaction with the other person. In the second stage teenagers meet in a small group with mixed genders. The group is created as a stage for a possible romantic relationship, but nothing is determined. If during this interaction a couple is formed, the third stage, intimate relationship, starts. In this phase, the importance of the peer group decreases and the focus shifts mainly on the partner. The last stage, committed romantic relationship, happens mostly at the late stage of adolescence and it is characterized by a long term relationship that combines attraction with intimacy and care.

At the beginning I liked him, but we never talked. Then I started going out with the same friends' group as him, and we started chatting. After some dates, we decide to be exclusive. - Participant (16 years-old)

Even if the model was theorized more than twenty years ago, a confirmation of it could be seen in some teen diaries as the quote shows. A possible explanation of this continuity could be found in the analysis done by WGSN insider in the report "Relationships Redefined". It seems that dating in adolescence did not change in modalities with the internet and contemporary technologies. While for young adults, intimate relationships and dating moved in the virtual space with popular dating apps such as Tinder and Grindr, for teenagers the majority of love stories still start offline.

The influence of media

Furthermore, the literature highlighted the status symbol of having a relationship during adolescence (Collins, 2009; Baker, 2017). Teenagers felt that having a partner is not only a means for self-validation ("I am loved therefore I am worthy"), but also a source of admirability ("I am loved therefore I am cool"). The media often highlight this connection by portraying popular teens as successful in their love stories. In addition to that, social media became an echo chamber for such dynamics. Social media offers teenagers an easy and accessible way to display their romantic relationship and potentially boost their popularity. All these factors combined with the importance given to the other peers' opinion, moves having a boyfriend/girlfriend in a high priority for adolescents. The pair "love = success" is not the only effect of media on adolescents' sentimental stories. Traditional media and social media have a significant influence on teens'

love relationships shaping their idea of them. First of all, they act as amplifiers of ideologies creating and reinforcing consensus on certain behaviours. For example, different Italian and international romantic hit songs and movies perpetuate the idea of love as a conquest. One person, typically the male, is encouraged to insist until the other part agrees to the request. The insistence that can also involve grand gestures is romanticized and shown under a positive light. Secondly, social media provides tools to navigate through people's lives without knowing that person. In other words, they allow intrusiveness without intimacy. This potential makes it easy to know a person faster, but also to control and monitor the partner. Since it is so easy to check on someone, controlling and monitoring behaviour are more accepted, and in some cases, perceived as a gesture of love and care.

6. Teenagers kissing



Relationship with friends and peers

How do teenagers perceive their peers?

What role do peers and friends play in a teenagers' relationships?

How is the relationship with peers evolving?

Adolescence presents a shift of attention from the family context to the peers one. Peers have multiple functions: they represent an essential source of support to gain independence from parents (Savarese, 2016) and they serve as an opportunity to help and advise others, a role that rarely emerges with adults. Moreover, one of the most important parts is to function as a staging ground for romantic relationships (Baker, 2017). By observing the others, teenagers learn how to interact with the desired gender, and what is proper to do or not to do.

This relevance pushes teenagers to keep in great consideration what other adolescents think and, as a consequence, to adapt their action to be accepted within a group (Hertzog, 2014). The peers' and friends' relevance found in the literature is confirmed also by teenagers' diaries. Seven out of nine teenagers put their friends closer to them rather than their family or relatives. Secondly, five adolescents mentioned having a figure of reference, usually an older peer, to look up for guidance.

The influence of peers on sentimental relationships

It is interesting to observe the consequences of the importance given to peers and friends on romantic relationships. In the literature and diaries, positive and negative influences are founded. In an initial stage of a relationship, friends can pressure others to start dating or actively dissuade a friend to begin seeing someone.

Moreover, friends can help initiate the relationship by delivering love messages or going out in a small group to allow the hypothetical couple to know each other. If at the beginnings of a love story, peers and friends can equally have a positive and negative influence, it seems that when a romantic relationship is established the balance shifts more on the negative side. It is important to mention that the negativity does not necessarily come from a direct and active role of peers, rather from the idea that even if in a relationship both parts still interact with their friends. Baker (2017) highlights how the majority of teenagers were unsure of how to interact with their friends after committing in a relationship. Moreover, they indicated their friends as a source of friction in the relationship. The result of this uncertainty can be seen also in teen diaries: two teenagers mentioned their decision to break up the relationship because it was taking too much time away

from their friends. On the other hand, three teenagers mentioned in their diaries to have ignored their friend during the relationship and they had to catch up after the break-up.

In addition to this, peers can also play an active role trying to split up the couple by pressuring one of the parts to break up or voluntarily creating friction.

Regarding the positive aspects, through the all relationship, friends can provide emotional support and advice. Almost all teenagers mentioned having asked their friends when in doubt in different stages of their love story. It is interesting to observe that, even when the teenager had friends from different genders from their own, they chose to ask the same-gender one because they had the feeling they could understand their point of view better.

The evolution of peer-to-peer interaction

While these dynamics can be seen back in generations, social media and new technologies are shaping peer-to-peer interaction in an unprecedented way. First, communication shifted from face-to-face to virtual messages. Texting allows editing and choosing precisely the message people want to communicate with others. Even if this could be seen as convenient, different trend reports highlighted how relationships are moving on a more superficial level because of this lack of “real” communication. As a surprising consequence, the more teenagers are connected online the more they experience loneliness. In other words, as Sherry Turkle, affirm in her book: “Online media give the illusion of companionship, without the wholeness of true friendship” (Turkle, 2017). Secondly, smart devices offer the

I liked him, but I turned him down because my friend had an ugly fight with him and I knew that if I start dating, she would have stopped talking to me - Participants (17years-old)

possibility to be in different places at the same time. People, and especially adolescents, are getting used to a new way to stay together. While being physically present, teenagers can also be connected to all the different virtual spaces they want to be in. They customize their attention, listening to their friends while posting a picture on Instagram or chatting with another friend. They want to stay together, but in control of their attention and mental presence. Finally, social media gave teenagers tools to showcase their life and to select carefully what to show and what not. This editing, combined with the importance given to peers can bring teenagers to put a lot of attention into how their online presence is perceived and into what others are sharing, keeping a constant comparison.



7. Students outside High School

Gender norms

How do gender norms influence the way adolescents behave?
How do different genders manage gender norms?
How did gender norms evolve over time?

We define gender norms as standards and expectations defined by a particular society and culture that women and men conform to (Gender norms. Retrieved from <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1194>). In the current society, the norms are based on two ideologies: masculinity and femininity. It is important to remark that such ideologies are independent from the sex of the person, and they can coexist in one person (De Graaf, 2004). However, societal expectations impose on people only one ideology based on the assigned sex at birth: femininity on women and masculinity on men (Tolman, 2016).

Femininity and masculinity

Following femininity ideology, girls need to be caring and quiet, avoid conflict and maintain a body that aligns with beauty standards without expressing any sexual desire (Brow & Gilligan, 1992). By contrast, masculinity ideology comprehends exercise power, being assertive and avoiding any feminine behaviours such as being emotional. Violence and aggressive behaviours are perceived both as a demonstration of these qualities and a way to oppress the ones challenging another masculine status (Reidy, 2015).

Concerning romantic relationships, both ideologies dictate a set of behaviours to people. Girls are in charge of preserving the relationship. They are in charge of the emotional wellbeing of the

When I started dating, I was terrified to the idea of saying no because I was afraid they would see me as a “loser” - Participant (19years-old)

couple, but first of all of their partner. If it is necessary, they need to follow their boyfriends' lead even if at the price of their own wellbeing. They need to be always ready to welcome their partner and his desire (Tolman, 2016). A relevant consequence of this passive role is the difficulty for girls to say no, also found it multiple times in the diaries. Girls don't legitimize the possibility of saying no to themselves since they are always conceptualized as an object of desire. Moreover, this passivity makes it harder to take the initiative in initiating a relationship and, especially, in manifesting their own sexual needs and wishes.

On the other hand, boys are asked to protect and provide for the partner (Kimmel, 2008). They can't show any vulnerability with their partner. As a matter of facts, they shouldn't be interested in

an emotional connection, but only in a physical one. In the study conducted by Tolman in four different countries the majority of boys felt pressured to act as sexual predators and to establish control in their relationship, especially through coercion and possessiveness, even when they are uncomfortable about adopting these behaviours (Tolman, 2016). Also in boys, the active role has a relevant consequence on managing a “No”. Boys can experience difficulties in saying no because their unwillingness goes against one defining factor of masculinity: the irresistible sexual desire. Moreover, for boys it is harder to process the no since they should always be the initiators, and they should not show emotions.

When she left me, I was sad, but then I thought I shouldn't be because I can find another girl - Participants (18 years-old)

Management of stereotypes

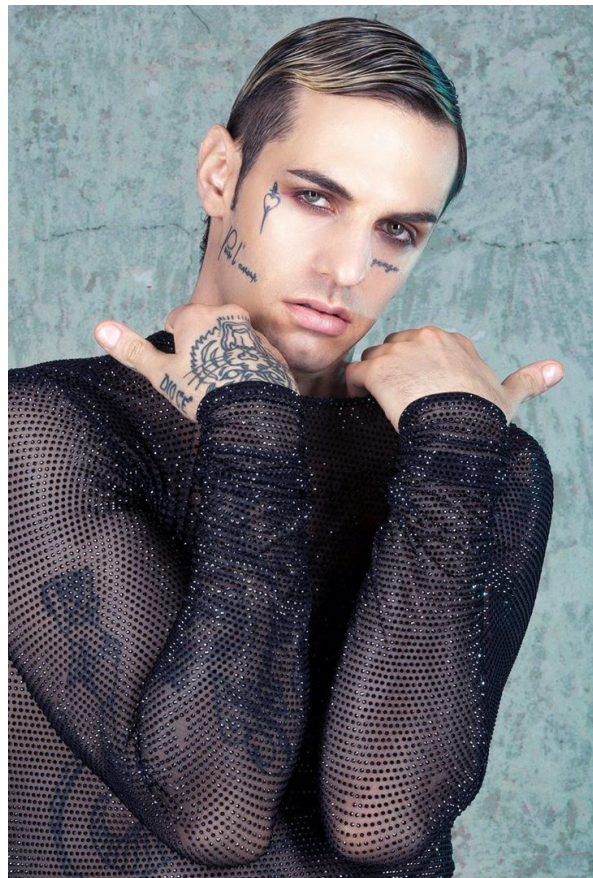
Social environments such as schools represent the place where teenagers learn gendered behaviours. They observe what is perceived positively in the community, and they police what is not conforming. Policing masculinity and femininity include all actions aimed to control the conformity of one person with the assigned gender stereotypes and acts as norm enforcement. Not adhering to those conducts could generate stress, anxiety or result in negative social consequences such as exclusion from the group (Reidy, 2015).

In most of the cases, teenagers are not aware of this social conditioning resulting in confusion around both their own and their partner's behaviours (Tolman, 2016). However, strong differences in way of managing gender norms were found between girls and boys. Girls, even if they are not aware of the origins of gender expectations, maintain their femininity according to their partner's masculinity. While boys acknowledge their partner's expectation, but they do not manage it in any way.

The situation today

Recently, steps were made in reaching gender equity in young people relationships. However, strict gender roles are still strong in adolescents heterosexual relationships (Tolman, 2016). On the other hand, with the extensive use of social media, old gender structures are shaking. Social media presents a wide variety of different lifestyles and perspectives to teenagers. This exposure makes teenagers more aware of differences and more welcoming and open to them. For example, multiple trend reports highlighted an increase in gender-fluid activists and campaigns to raise awareness about gender stereotypes and their consequences. In Italy, singers and young public figures are starting challenging the traditional gender roles in their appearance and with their artistic work. Example of this phenomenon can be seen in the following pictures of Ghali and Achille Lauro, famous singer especially among teenagers.

8. Achille Lauro and Ghali



Dealing with rejection

What emotions characterized the rejector and rejected experiences?
What is the correct attitude towards rejection and teenagers that have been rejected or rejected?
How the changes in society influence intimate rejection?

Rejection happens on different occasions in romantic relationships. It can take place in the dating stage (not answering to texts, refusing to go out or on a second date), during the relationships (not wanting sex or any other physical contact) or at the ending of the relationship (breaking up). In a more general sense, rejection in a relationship is the denied willingness of one person by the other. Therefore, two “roles” are highlighted: the rejector, the one denying, and the rejected, the person denied. Even if the experiences of those roles diverge, both could struggle in dealing with rejection.

The rejector experience

The rejector could experience a moral dilemma: on one side the desire of not hurting the other and on the other side the will of refusing (Baumeister, 1993). This doubt, together with the uncertainty of the other reaction, mark the rejector experience with guilt and anxiety. Based on these feelings, a person could decide to postpone the rejection. However, this decision aggravates the situation and develops the initial annoyance into an intensive feeling of persecution and frustration.

I had to break up with him. I tried not to, but he was suffocating me and when I did it, I felt like a weight was removed from my chest.

- Participants (18 years-old)

Instead, a correct attitude includes being honest and open with the other, but firstly with yourself. It is important to connect with personal needs and desire and base the decision on them instead of expectation or fears (interview sexologist, 2020). This approach is valid also if any guilt or shame feeling arose after the rejection.

The rejected experience

On the other hand, experiencing rejection could be perceived as a barrier to the desire fulfilment, a threat to self-esteem or an indication of complete loss of interest in the relationship. These interpretations generate rage and humiliation. Anger and shame are central in the rejected experience, and if the person is not well equipped to deal with these strong emotions, aggression towards the other may seem a way to seek revenge or restore control (Williams, 2002). Moreover, since coping with rejection is not a pleasant experience, people could adopt a risk regula-

tion strategy. Risk regulation affirms that people are inclined to minimize their vulnerability by regulating their expectations accordingly or controlling the other's behaviour (Muise, 2016). The higher the fear of rejection, the stronger the regulation and controlling behaviour. Another reaction from the rejected could be ignored or discount the other response. **This attitude is largely supported by a substantial part of the media where a no is a yes in the making.** Such influence could normalize insisting or not respecting the other will, leading people to an even stronger reaction when not obtaining what they wanted and worked for. This behaviour also found confirmation in multiple teenagers' diaries where the other person after receiving a no continued texting, insisting or diminishing the other to achieve what they wanted. Finally, literature and teenagers' diaries highlight how both parts experience loneliness and isolation when confronted with rejection. People that are experiencing discomfort, sadness or pain tend to close in themselves thinking that they are the only one experiencing these emotions and therefore no one else could understand or improve the situation.

Healthy response to rejection

To embrace a healthier attitude towards rejection, it is important to manage from the beginning the personal expectations, and to consider that the situation can evolve in both ways. When confronted with a no, it is helpful not to react immediately, instead wait and breath to avoid impulsive reactions. Moreover, keeping a calm attitude could help to start a dialogue to understand the other's perspective and reasons. After the rejection moment, emotions such as sadness, shame and anger could emerge. It is essential not to repress these emotions because it is part of the human experience, but it is also crucial to not practise self-harming actions as negative self-talking. Instead, practising self-compassion could help not only in coping with the difficult moment, but also to create a prolific ground for personal growth. As mentioned in different teenagers diaries, finding strength and resilience during difficult times helped teenagers in gaining self-esteem, self-awareness and reflect on their behaviour. In the following page it is possible to see the insights from the psychologists on how to react in the different stages of rejection.

I believe that a sad moment should leave you something that you can use in the next relationship - Participants (17 years-old)

I was sad, but I learned about me, about what I want and what I don't want - Participant (19 years-old)

	How to prepare	How to react healthy	How to process
Rejector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to yourself and check your needs Understand when you want to say yes or no 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be clear and honest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Think that you didn't do anything wrong Consider the other point of view Think about yourself: you are your first priority
Rejected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop empathy, take into account the other Check your expectation. Keep in mind that can go both ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breath and don't act impulsively Ask and express your feelings Think that is a moment and will pass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take you time to process and know that it will be better Think that probably the "No" is no to the person, but to the activity

Finally, literature and experts agree on the facts that the way people deal with rejection is transforming due to societal changes. The introduction of new and fast technologies diminish people's ability to deal with frustration. Instant gratification lowers people's patience by providing immediate response after an action.

9. Psychologists' advice

Sentimental and Sexual education

What resources are available for teenagers and educators in Italy and worldwide about SE?

How the existing resources approach rejection or in general sentimental/sexual education?

How is rejection/sexual/sentimental education addressed in families and schools?

With sexual education is meant all notions and knowledge given to youth to allow them in making conscious, satisfying and respectful decisions regarding their sexuality. Considering the broadness of sexuality, sexual education can focus on one or more aspects. Possible approaches can be: knowing the reproductive systems (biological approach), prevention of sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancy (medical approach), managing romantic relationships (relation approach), respect and consent (violence prevention approach), and sexual and gender identity development. Following the WHO policies, it is recommended to start with sexual education in childhood by adopting first the biological and medical approach, and moving in adolescence to the relational and sentimental aspects (WHO, 2010). However, it is important to highlight that these guidelines are advised and not mandatory. In Europe, each country can decide by its own creating a heterogeneous situation.

The Italian situation

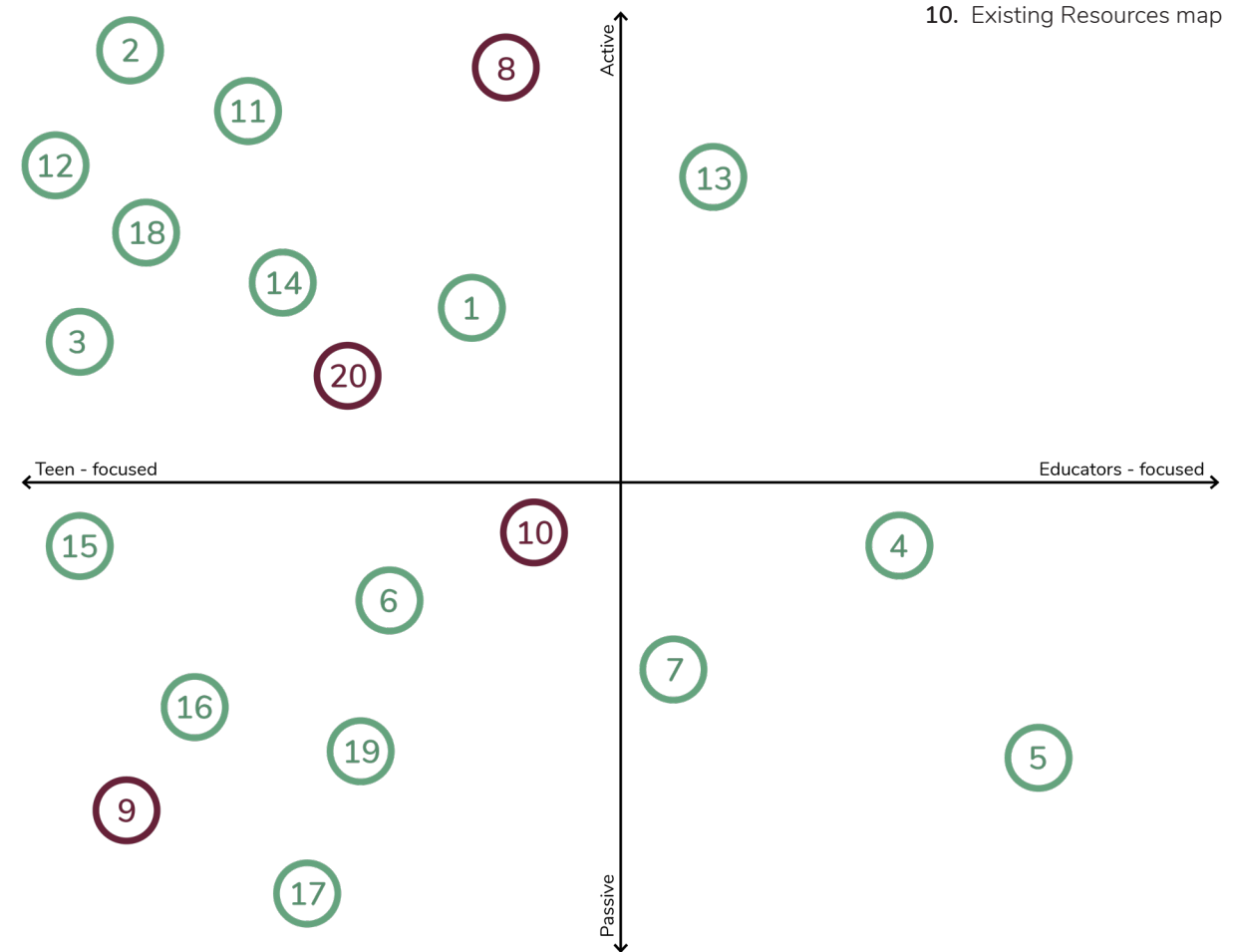
Concerning Italy, there are no official guidelines about Sexual and Sentimental education. Despite the attempts to insert mandatory sexual education in schools, the legislation had not changed since 1991 when it was decided to add the explanation of reproductive organs and sexually transmitted diseases in biology programs (Parker, 2009). The lack of clear guidelines shifted the responsibility for sexual education from the government to individual initiatives of schools and associations creating an inconsistency in the way sex education is taught, the tools used

“Sexual education in Italy is a fragmented patchwork of different initiatives. For example, there are region that implemented valuable programs and other none, the same with schools” - Researcher

and the aims of the program. In figure 10, it is possible to see the result from the analysis of tools and resources available in Italy and Worldwide.

Looking at the distribution of resources on the map is possible to do different observations. First, even if the research was done using the same keywords in English and Italian, considerably fewer resources explicitly designed for the Italian context were found. Moreover, all the tools found for the Italian context were addressed to teen-

10. Existing Resources map



- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 - That is not cool | 11 - My Possible Self |
| 2 - Respect Effect | 12 - MeeTwo app |
| 3 - Killafragor | 13 - Sexesploration |
| 4 - Dating matters | 14 - DareMeApp |
| 5 - TC Gender equality | 15 - BreakTheCycle |
| 6 - Teen safe project | 16 - Love, the good, the bad the ugly |
| 7 - Rutgers Explore | 17 - Love is respect |
| 8 - Me&You&Everyone | 18- OnYourMind |
| 9 - W L'Amore | 19 - Ask Alice |
| 10 - Love&Respect | 20 - Educatore tra pari |

- Worldwide
- Italian

The majority of professors thought the program was a waste of time and a way to skip lectures - Peer educator

agers, no resources were available for parents or educators. The absence of specific tools for educators is interesting, especially if coupled with both the fact that according to the researchers, educators are not perceived as reliable figures by teenagers to talk about relation-sexual issues. Not only they are not seen as trustworthy, but some of them are also reluctant to invest time and energy in sexual education programs.

Concerning the interactivens: all interactive resources focused on the teenagers, while for educators all tools were passive, usually consisting of a document to read or a video to watch. On the other hand, interactive resources targeting teenagers had similar approaches and modalities. The majority of tools had a positive approach to sex and relationships, focusing more on the wholeness of a relationship and discussing healthy and unhealthy dynamics instead of focusing only on the last ones. In addition to that, they presented a reliable experiences to teenagers asking them questions or triggering dialogue around it.

Family and Sexual education

Finally, only three resources took into account the family. Despite the lack of resources aimed to talk about and educate about sexuality in the family context, the sexologists interviewed agreed on the importance of bringing up this topic while growing up. Sexuality is a natural aspect of human beings, and it should be addressed as such to create an open and welcoming environment to promote dialogue. However, the results from the

parents' interview highlight how talking about sexuality and sexual development could be challenging.

Parents felt unnecessary talking about sexuality for different reasons as the quotes show. First, they considered the topic too personal to talk about, or that

the son/daughter will not listen to them, especially if they are teenagers. Moreover, they struggled understanding the correct approach, and some of them minimized what the teenagers were feeling or their need to talk about sexuality and eventually rejection. As a consequence, even if the majority of teenagers affirmed their family was close to them, they did not seek advice or felt at ease in sharing stories.

"I am never sure how to address this and when is the right moment" - Parent

"I don't think it is appropriate that we talk about, he will learn growing up" - Parent

2.4 | Context factors

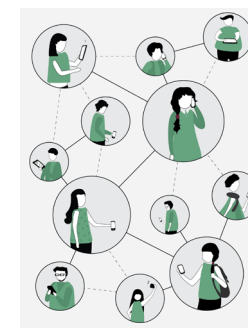
After gaining knowledge in the different areas of relevance, the insights were clustered to create seven context factors. The classification was not done by field, as in the previous section, but by identifying the underlying themes they responded to. Therefore, the context factors helped in explaining the world where adolescents are living and how their romantic relationships are influenced by it. They contributed to shape the future vision and predict the context in which the solution will be placed. They are divided into two categories: general and specific. The general factors refer to important elements about society, while the specific ones help in framing the context of rejection in adolescents romantic relationships. The overview of all the main insights is visible in the Appendix G.

11. Context factors overview

General factors



No unified values



Connected yet alone

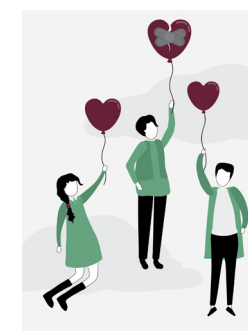


No longer, but not yet

Specific factors



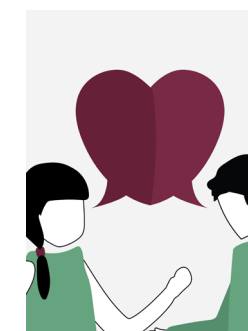
Peers as microsystem



Emotional first aid



Sexual and sentimental education



A space to talk

Peers as micro-system

In adolescence, individuals start creating their own identity in continuity and contrast with their context. The family is no longer the main context and point of reference to teenagers, but there is a shift towards friends and peers. As a consequence, teenagers need to find a place in this new context, create new points of reference and construct their own identity. On the other hand, the relevance of peers can have negative consequences. The pressure to “fit in”, the sensibility to what others think, and how others behave can be a source of stress. Otherwise, it can create an urge to act in agreement with the group even when that is damaging for others or the teenager himself. In this context, romantic relationships can have another role: teenagers reported that having a girlfriend/boyfriend makes them feel more popular, more accepted and successful in their context.

Key factors

Peer awareness

There is a significant distinction between what teenagers believed their peers think and what they actually think. In particular, the difference is more significant if we consider cross-genders interactions.

Peer pressure

Teenagers found their peers a source of pressure to start dating. Girls felt stressed not only by boys but also by their close female friends.

A pressure to fit in

One of the higher priorities of teenagers is to fit in in a social context, be accepted and appreciated.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem can be linked to how people manage rejection. Higher self-esteem is less prone to feel ashamed and react aggressively towards the other.

Relationship as my status

For teenagers having a relationship could be seen as a status, a way to have respect and admiration of their peers. A boyfriend or girlfriend assumes a social role as a trophy.

Friends' relationship

Relationship with friends can have different roles in a romantic relationship. Teenagers supported and advised each other, or they ignored each other if they start a sentimental story or even obstructed the other relationship.



No unified value

Society values are not only changing, but they are not unified anymore. Previously, a large part of society shared the same set of values, but nowadays this is radically changing. In the previous generation adults were trusted more than any children. Any educator, such as teacher or coach, was considered more trustworthy than a minor. Parents rely blindly on schools to provide the best education and knowledge possible and blame their child for any failure. Now, due to the new theory of pedagogy, the change in perception of children and the general distrust of institutions, parents want to actively be involved in their children's education and decide the direction to take even if it is opposite from the one decided by the school. This difference creates a clash in values and difficulties from both sides that does not seem to stop in the future.

Key factors

A new pedagogy

Alice Miller is guiding the movement of a new pedagogy defining "poisonous" all types of pedagogies that undermine the children's needs by repressing or treating them. At the opposite, "White Pedagogy" wants to support the children without coercive or manipulative behaviours.

Knowledge access

Online, it is possible to find virtual libraries and encyclopedias, such as Wikipedia or came across different ideas or perspectives not considered before.

Parents' overprotection

Parents nowadays tend more to protect their children from suffering rather than give them the tools to manage their suffering since it is more comfortable and requires less time.

Educators' reluctance

In public schools, most teachers and educators do not think is important to talk about consent or sexual education in general. They feel the school is not the right environment for such information.

No resources for Italian educators

There is a scarcity of resources addressed to Italian parents and educators. The few resources only target teenagers



Connected yet alone

Technology gave people access to infinite communities, places to talk, to confront. Social media are a great example of this phenomenon, they give voice to all their users and they create space for a large variety of opinions and perspectives. However, generation Z is believed to be the generation that is experiencing the highest levels of loneliness. The virtual togetherness is lacking of connection sense and warm-heartedness that offline interactions can have. Face to face interactions are complicated, conversations are unpredictable and chaotic, while with technology and especially texting the communication is “polished-up” giving more control on the messages and impressions that are transmitted. However, it seems that this control is costing the inability to build a solid relationship in real life and deal with the higher uncertainty that implies.

Key factors

Technology gap

The technology gap is increasing between digital native and the other generations. Generation z incorporates technology in their everyday life, making using devices distinctive traits of their characters, while previous generations find it hard to keep it up.

Instant gratification

Instant gratification is the experience of immediate pleasure or fulfilment received after an action. Due to current technologies, the delay between an action and its consequences is getting smaller and smaller.

Control over spontaneusness

Texting gets people used to control how they come across. Spontaneusness and its unpredictable outcomes is a characteristic that generates more and more discomfort.

Tech expectations

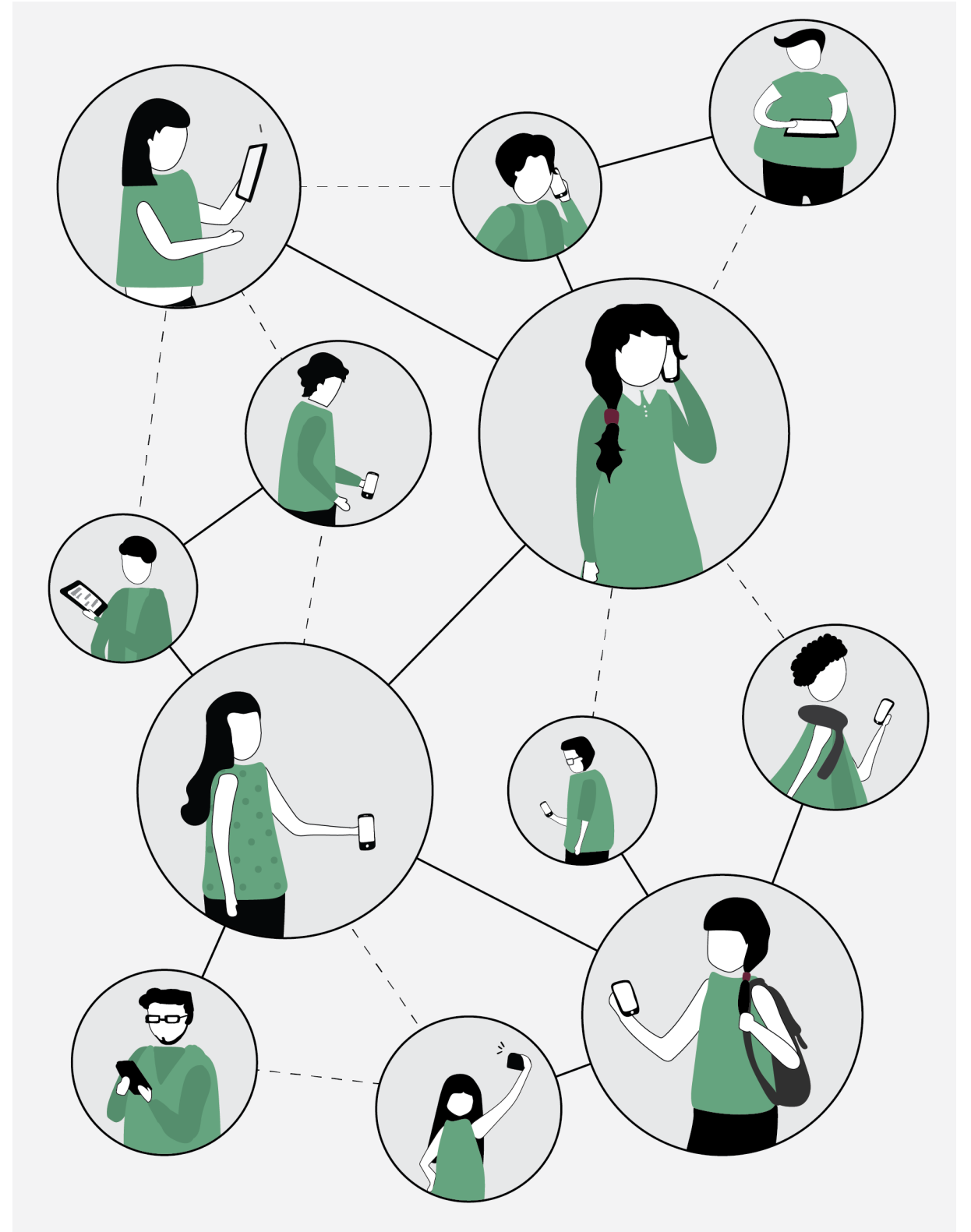
There is a shift in expectation: people are progressively expecting more from technology and less from each other.

Isolation feeling

Teenagers felt isolated when they had to reject someone, or they were denied. A natural process in our brain causes this feeling: since pain is experienced by the person only, that person is pushed to believe no one else will understand it.

Online and offline resources

Most of the resources were based online or tried to foster a virtual community.



Promoting vs Preventing

Promoting healthy relationships and preventing intimate violence are faces of the same coin, but they highlight different aspects. The first one, starts from the complexity of intimate relationships tackling all aspects and raising awareness of unhealthy dynamics and how to change them. However, the focus is also on healthy dynamics, how to empower and preserve them as a strategy of prevention. While on the other hand, preventing intimate violence focuses only on the unhealthy dynamics, tackling the potential risks and offering resources to recognize violent behaviours, avoid or escape from them. Literature and experts agree on the fact that even if violence prevention is needed, it fails to engage teenagers. Adolescents do not want to be portrayed as potential victims or perpetrators and, moreover, they feel distant from the topic of violence. On the other hand, intimate relationships and their dynamics is a topic central during their development and therefore, programs focused on promoting healthy behaviours in adolescents are often more engaging and successful.

Key factors

Real situations

Teenagers feel that violence, gender inequalities are a topic away from them. They don't concern them because they live in a "fake" equalitarian environment like the school. It is essential to bring stories they can relate, such as their personal experiences to get them closer to the topic.

Experience starting point

Most resources triggered the curiosity of the teenagers and tested their knowledge presenting to the real situations. The sexologists also recommended this approach.

Body positivity

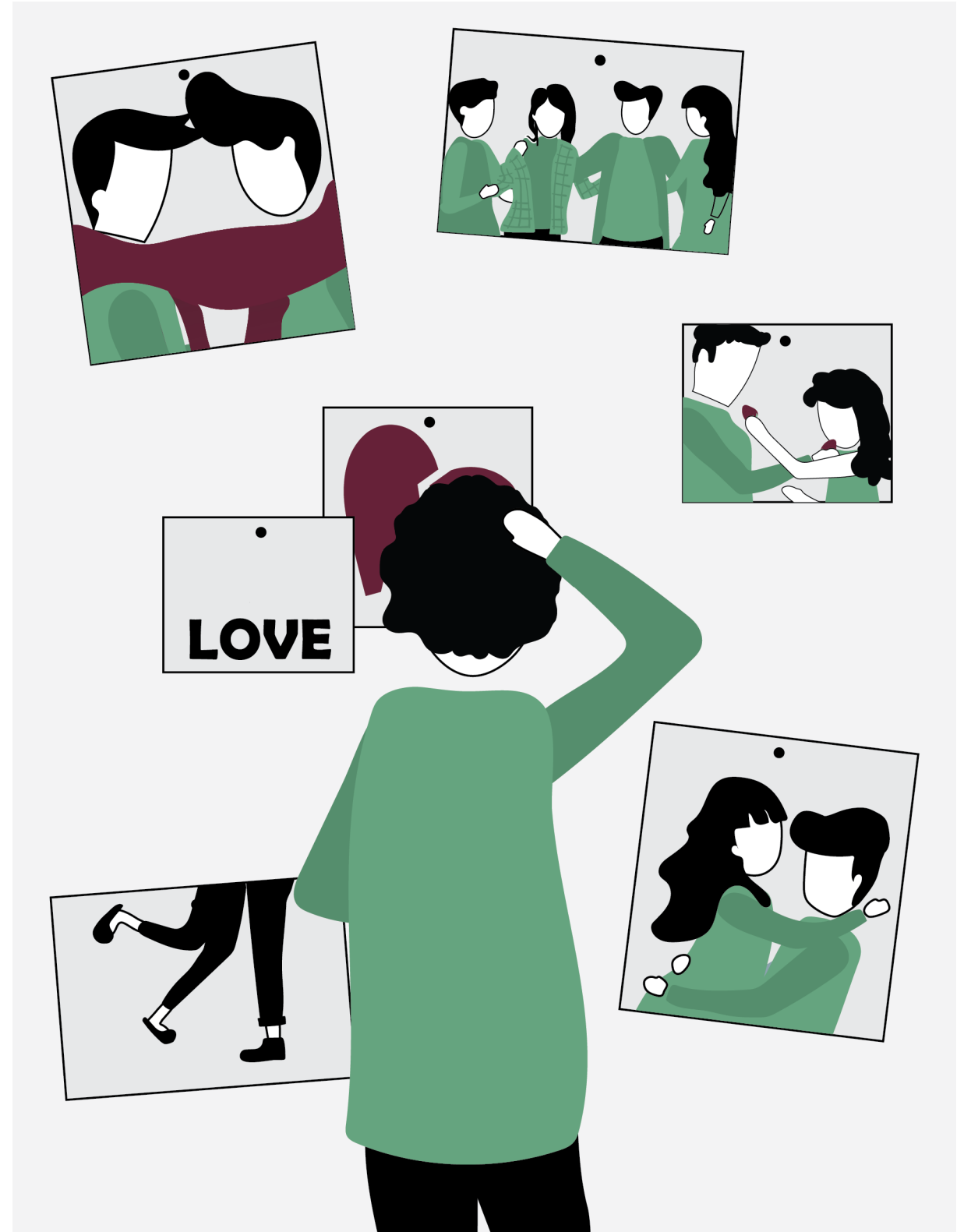
The perfection of the human figures widely showcased through the media is being questioned. People would like to see other imperfect human beings, just like them. The movement of body positivity promotes a healthy relationship with the body to self-accept yourself.

Information and quiz

The majority of resources regarding sexual education and teenagers' dating for self-use have the goal to provide information and trigger adolescents' attention on the topic with quizzes based on real experiences.

A medical approach

In Italy, sex education is managed by the Local Health Unit under the Health minister. Therefore, the main focus is on disease and unwanted pregnancy prevention.



No longer, but not yet

Societal norms are always changing, they shape people's behaviours and they are shaped by people. Nowadays, these changes are faster and deeper concerning the family structure. The post World War II model, where the men were in charge of providing financial stability and the women were relegated in the house taking care of children and the elderly is falling. The job market crisis and the feminist movements shook the foundations of this system, bringing to the table new perspectives and models. However, society has not yet arrived at a new paradigm where the two parts are equal, and they can independently choose what they prefer to do. Sexuality is often represented in a binary mode where there is a subject, usually the men, that feel an impulse, and an object of that desire, the women, that need to fulfil the desire. This view, besides excluding any other sexuality but eterisexuality, forces people in a limited number of categories and therefore behaviours.

Key factors

Emotional phobia

Psychologists highlighted how previous generations, such as Baby Boomers or Generation X, were educated to fear their emotions and they were tricked into believing showing emotions was a sign of weakness.

Gen z more welcoming

One of the core values of Gen Z is the radical inclusivity of diversity in all forms. There is lower tolerance for stereotypes, discrimination and any service or product that doesn't include minorities.

Gender fluid

Gender identity and sexual identity have been questioned in recent times. Due to social media and the exposure to different perspectives, the dichotomy female/male is shaking give space to a whole spectrum of identities.

Masculinity and femininity

Gender stereotypes are a group of characteristics and roles that dictate how male and female should behave based only on their assigned sex.

Object and subject

Gender stereotypes promote a double vision of relationships. There is an object of desire, usually, the female, that needs to be assertive and a subject, usually the male, which can decide to whom to address his attention.

Love as a conquest

Media such as movies or tv series amplify the idea that boys need to "conquer" the girl's heart. Therefore, that is recommended to insist, act with "romantic gestures" to obtain the necessary consent.



Emotional first aid

In our society, it is normal to take care of physical injuries. Resources and infrastructure are assigned to this duty. Moreover, preventing and healing physical injuries is one of the first skills we are taught growing up. However, society treats emotional wounds differently. Even if literature demonstrates that emotional pain activates the same brain parts as the physical one, people are not taught how to cope with it. This lack of resources can create serious damage to a person's self-esteem and personality. For example, different psychologists highlighted that after a rejection the majority of damage is self-inflicted by negative thoughts, self-criticism and self-blaming. In this way a vicious cycle is created: the more damage is inflicted, the more hurtful the rejection will be and so on.

Key factors

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence was an essential parameter to become peer educators. It comprehends the ability to recognize emotions, understand the causes and regulate them effectively in yourself and others.

Friends supporting friends

Most adolescents were happy to support their friends, and they were interested in knowing how they could do it better. However, they tend to project their own need while supporting the other without asking what that person really needs.

I am doing this to myself

Usually, the worst part of rejection is self-inflicted. Negative self-talking and self-blaming are powerful tools to diminish ourselves and create psychological damage making it harder to recover from a rejection.

Managing discomfort

Managing discomfort can be hard. If teenagers fail in doing so, they could have unfair behaviours towards the other such as ghosting or ignoring the problem.

The bright side of sufferance

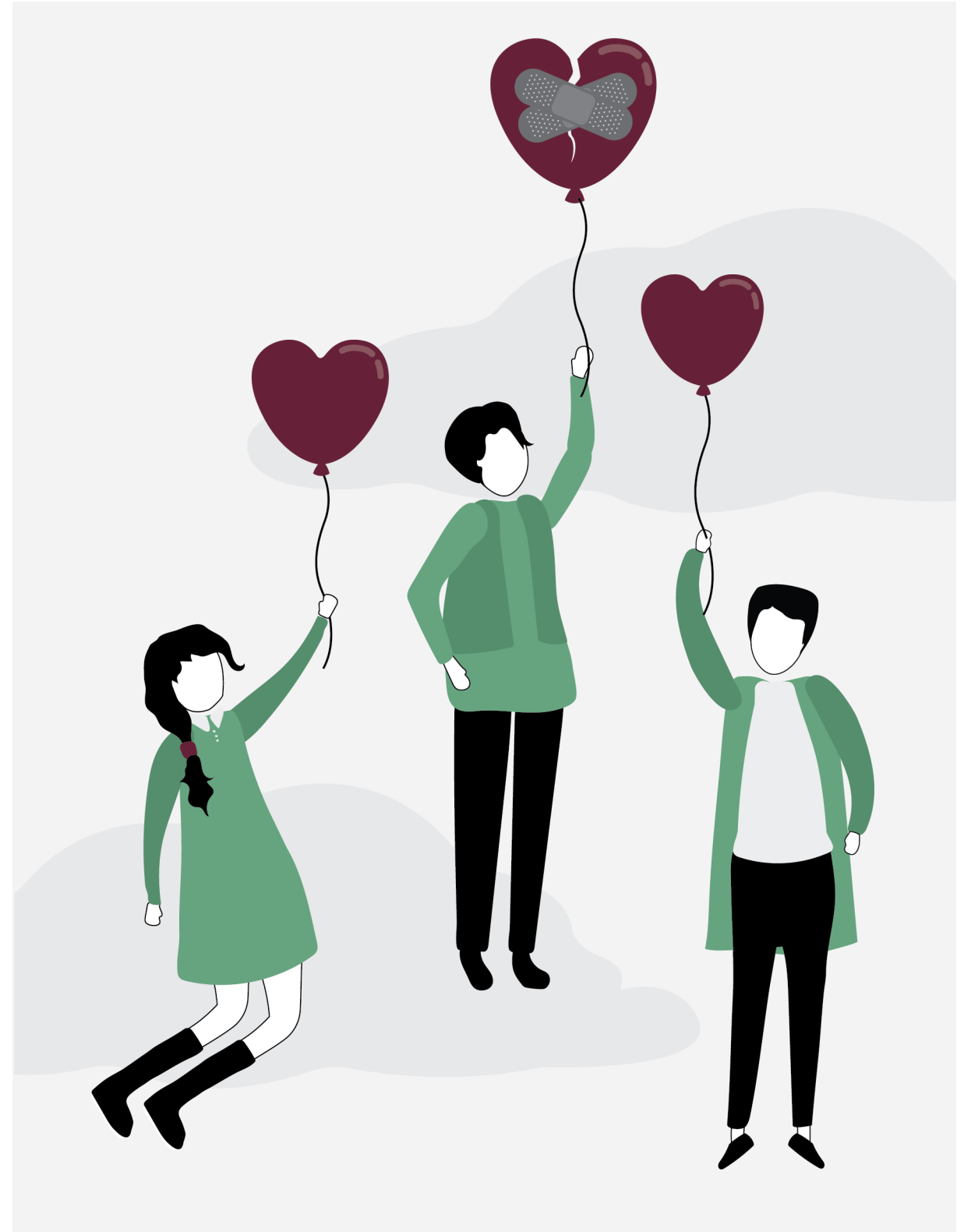
Teenagers highlight how they learned something in moments of difficulty. They reflect on their behaviours, they appreciated their strength in saying no, or they learned something new.

Risk control

Risk regulation theory affirms that people are driven in thinking and acting in ways that diminish the risk of rejection from their partner and increase the chances of preserving the relationship over time.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is an important parameter to predict how a teenager will manage a rejection.



A space to talk

Sexuality is a vital aspect of developing someone's identity. The World Health Organization define sexuality as "a central aspect of being human. It encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction". Despite the recognized importance of sexuality, there is still little space to talk about it in Italian society. The topic is still perceived as a taboo in most families. Parents struggle in approaching it, especially with teenagers and adolescents don't feel comfortable enough to talk about it with their parents. In schools, the situation is not different. There are no guidelines from the government on how to deal with this topic in schools, and there are no other public spaces where this topic can be addressed. It seems that the only available space to talk about and discover sexuality is online. However, navigating the web, especially without awareness, can lead to wrong information or to underestimate potential dangers.

Key factors

No reliable source of information

Teenagers look for information about sex and relationships on the internet because in real life there are no satisfying answers to their questions.

Unexplored land

Teenagers never spoke to anyone about consent and rejection neither they reflected on them. Society doesn't offer them the tools and spaces.

The right moment

Talking about rejection, consent and sex could be difficult for some parents. In particular, parents find it challenging to understand when it is a proper time to have this conversation with teenagers.

Critical sense

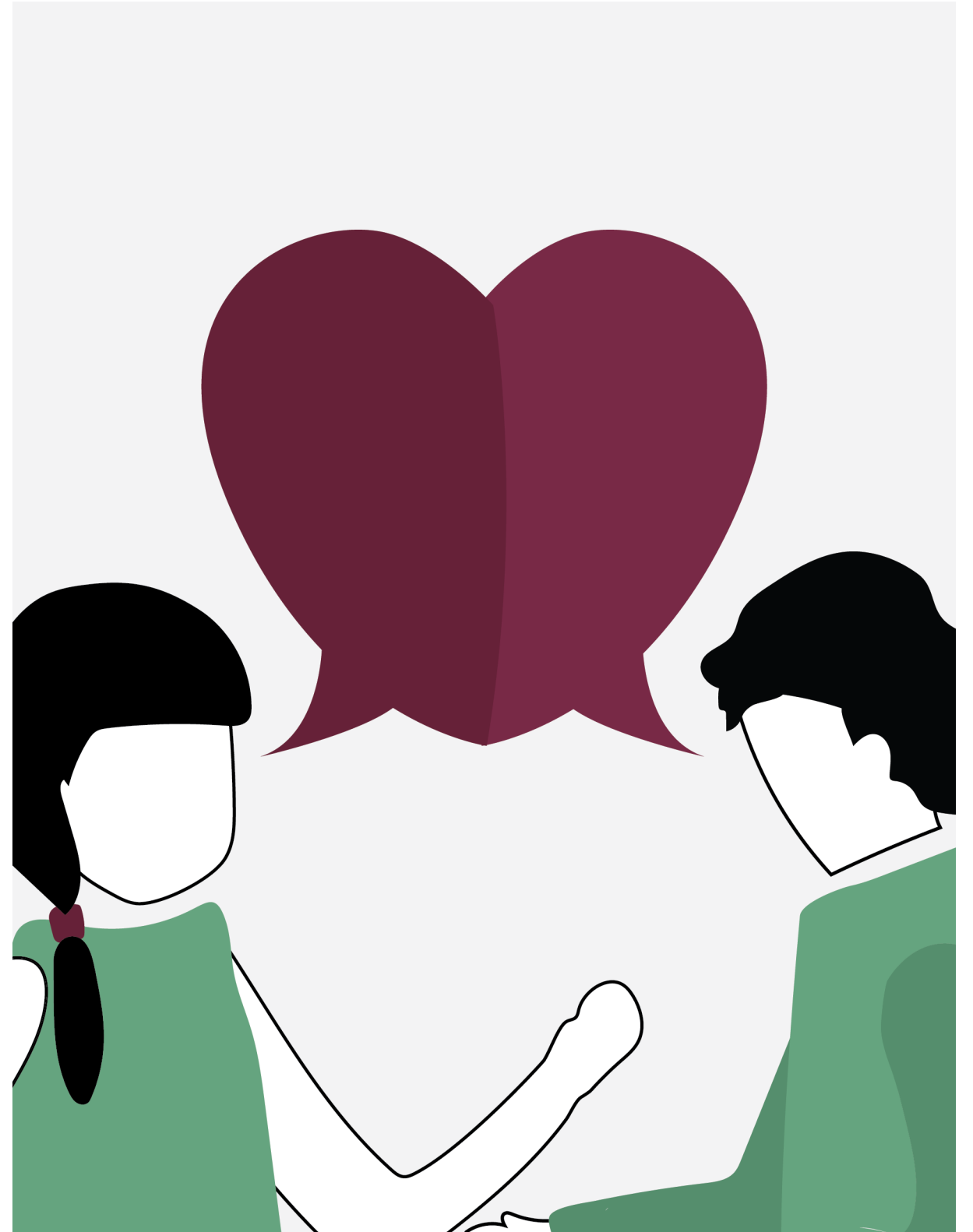
Critical sense can be trained and improved. Nowadays, society doesn't offer a lot of spaces to exercise this skill and adolescents are losing the ability to question the reality and reflect on it.

Credibility

Often teenagers are looked down, and their problems are minimized. However, one of the first desire to have their voice heard, opinion and experiences considered.

Everything should be welcomed

A correct approach to talk with teenagers is non-judgmental and non-moralistic. Every opinion should be accepted and discussed.



2.5 | Main Takeaways

Offline dating

For teenagers the new technology did not change the modalities of meeting new people. The majority meet offline at school, sports club or with common friends. Then the process to get to know the other is shifted online with the help of social media.

Relationship meaning

Teenagers live relationships on different levels. Besides the new experience to explore, the relationship is lived as a means for self-validation and a source of popularity among peers.

Media impact

Media have a powerful impact on teenagers' ideas of relationships. They can project in their head ideas of what is desirable and what not, how a good relationship should look and what to avoid.

Expectations role

Expectation plays an important role in the reaction to rejection. Societal expectations can influence teenagers' ideas of what is accepted. For example, the majority of girls expect the boy to do the first step.

Distrust in educators

Teenagers don't consider educators as a valid source of information or advice. They don't feel understood and think the generation gap is too big for them to empathize. Therefore, they prefer seeking advice online or asking friends.

Define

The Define chapter aims to report the analysis of the context and the main conclusions necessary to formulate the design goal and interaction vision. The chapter begins by providing a summary from the previous part, then it reports the methods used for the analysis. After, the results are explained using the Context model and Personas.

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3.1 | Introduction

The areas of relevance and the context factors explained in the previous chapter highlight different opportunities for the design intervention. To better frame the context, the data was analyzed, clustered and structured and critically interpreted to create fertile ground to choose a specific design direction.

3.2 | Methodology

Two procedures were adopted to analyse the context both in its totality and its specificity. In the following paragraphs, a more detailed explanation is reported.

General analysis

For the general analysis, it was not used a specific methodology, rather different iterative analysis sessions. The investigation started from the context factors identified in the previous chapter. The factors were displayed in a Venn diagram to highlight the relationships within one another and the underlying opportunities generated by the intersections. Afterwards, the links within the opportunities were explored to create a comprehensive context structure. The structure was iterated, enriched and re-organized following the Bronfenbrenner ecological model to clearly display the different levels or environments around teenagers. More information on the process are available in Appendix H.

Specific analysis

To specifically address users' needs and have a good understanding of the different behaviours and approaches in the context, the tool of personas was used. The starting point for the creation of the profiles were the teenagers' diaries. The diaries were analyzed looking for relevant parameters that had an evident influence on the users' behaviour. After individualizing the parameters, the values were combined to create four different approaches and therefore, personas.

3.3 | Context model

In agreement with the previous research, the context model follows the structure of the ecological model by Bronfenbrenner to understand the different layers singularly and in relation with each other. It is composed of four parts: Society, Community, Interpersonal and Individual.

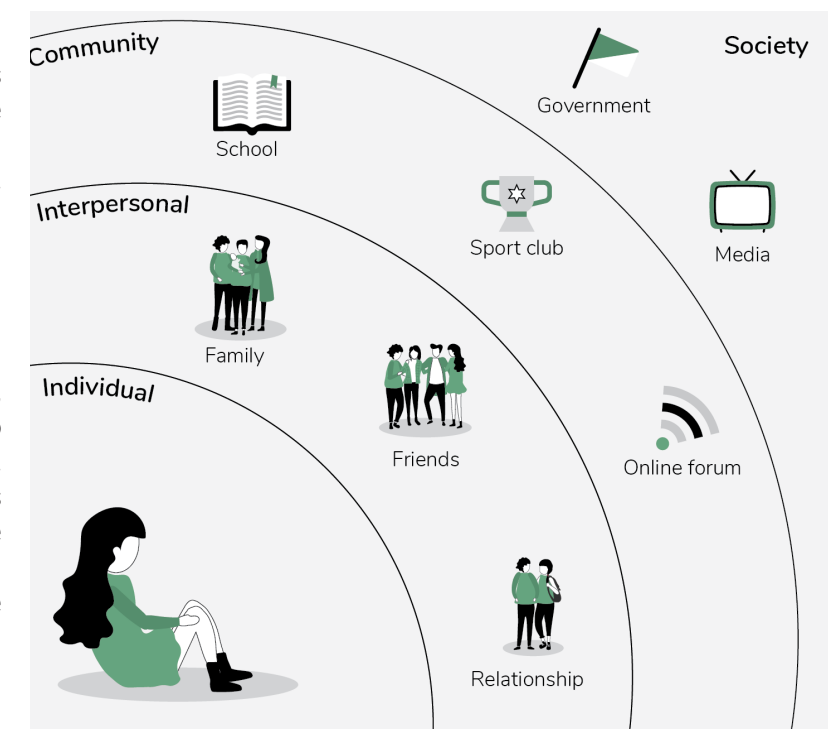
The **Society level** corresponds to what Bronfenbrenner defined as Macrosystem. This layer looks at the broader pictures: which values are prized and which not in the current society and the influences of this on rejection storytelling.

The **Community level**, Exosystem in the ecological model, articles how relevant communities such as school, sports club and neighbourhood are relevant for teenagers to deal with the idea of rejection.

In the **Interpersonal level** or Mesosystem, it is shown how teenagers manage rejection and how the close relationships influence the experience.

The **Individual level** highlights how rejection affects the emotional and psychological sphere of a singular individual. In the Bronfenbrenner model it is called Microsystem.

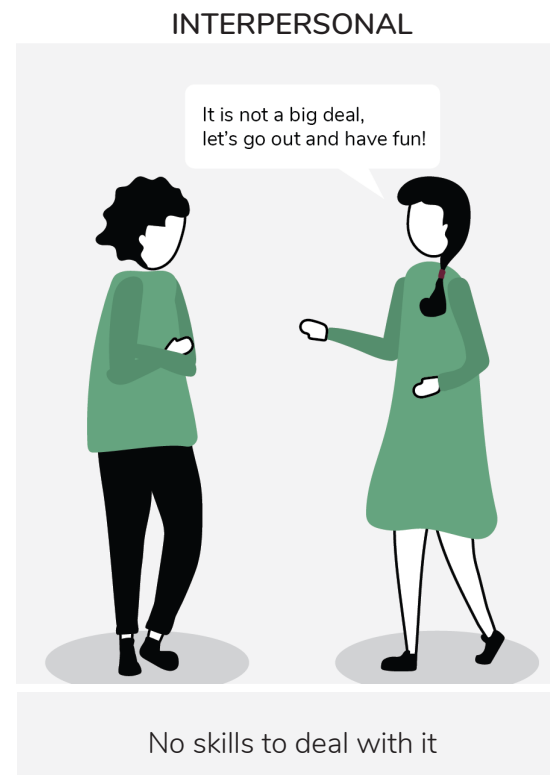
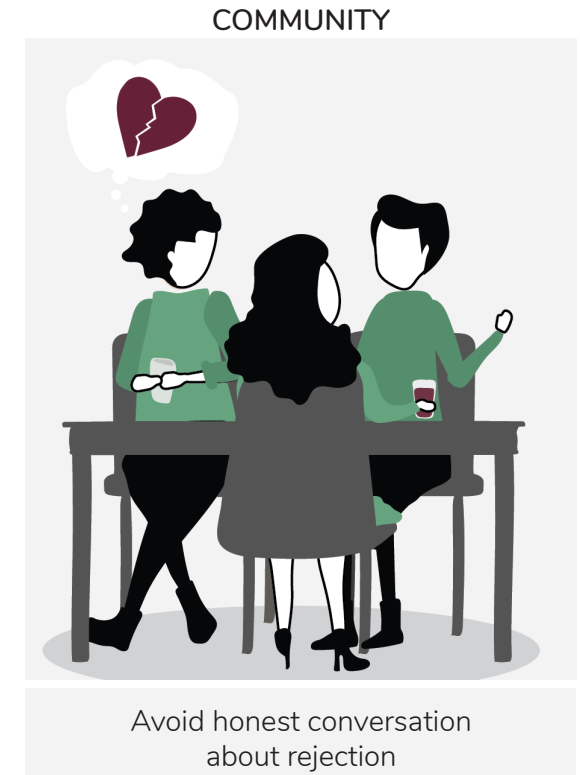
Moreover, to create contraposition between the current situation and the envisioned one, the model was split into two parts with the same structure. In the first one, the context is presented as it is now, while the second one explores possible alternatives to improve the rejection management.



12. Teenagers' ecological model

The current situation

Currently, society interprets the rejection, and more generally failures, as a tragedy on the ego level. In movies and other popular media, the idea of receiving a no is seen in a negative key. It promotes the idea that the no is referred to the person rather than to the activity. Moreover, because of how the social media are designed, people tend to share only “sugar-coated” images of themselves and their relationship creating a perfect picture where rejection management or any other potentially negative aspects are left out. This reluctance raises the threshold to have conversations about it in communities. Teenagers don’t have a designated place to talk about such topics. Schools do not have comprehensive programs for sexual education, and most of the family feels the topic is too personal and embarrassing to talk about. As a consequence, teenagers never heard stories about rejection and other points of view about it. This lack makes it harder to deal with it or support others on the interpersonal level. Most teenagers repeat the same behaviour they saw from their educators: they minimize or judge what others are feeling or even what they are feeling. The harsh judgment increases the threshold in asking for help when needed on the individual level. Moreover, the silence around the topic could make teenagers believe they are the only one experiencing a similar episode making them feel isolated. Finally, the idea of rejection as personal failure creates a shame-wall around teenagers challenging to destroy. Therefore a natural reaction is to try to move on the quickest as possible and pretend the “failure” never happened. This refusal of processing and acceptance, stops the teenagers from reflecting and growing.

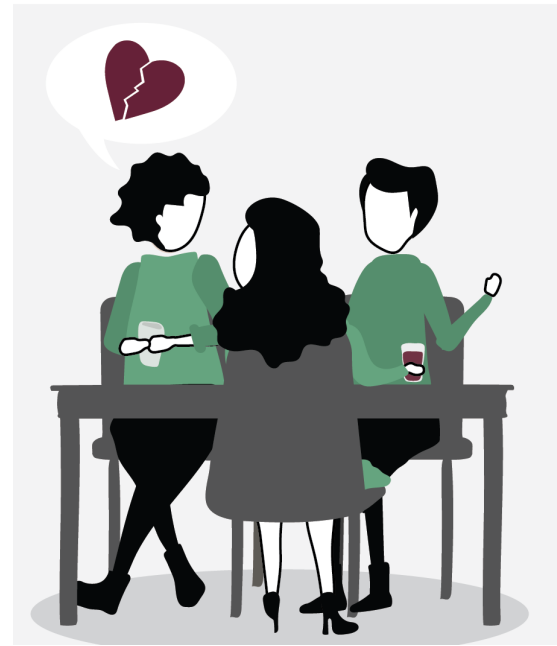


SOCIETY



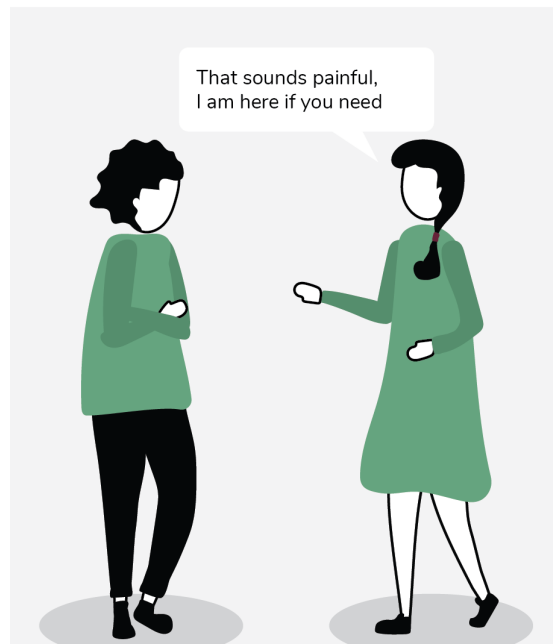
Feeling seen/understood
Growing

COMMUNITY



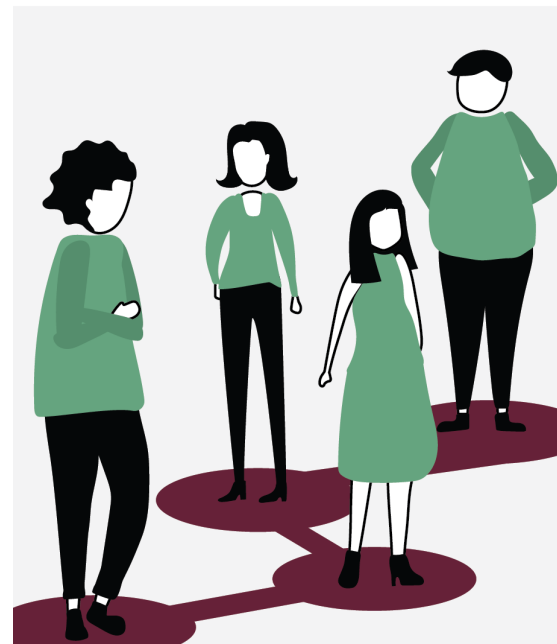
Embrace honest conversation
about rejection

INTERPERSONAL



Skills to deal with it

INDIVIDUAL



Rejection as an opportunity to grow,
tragedy on the heart level

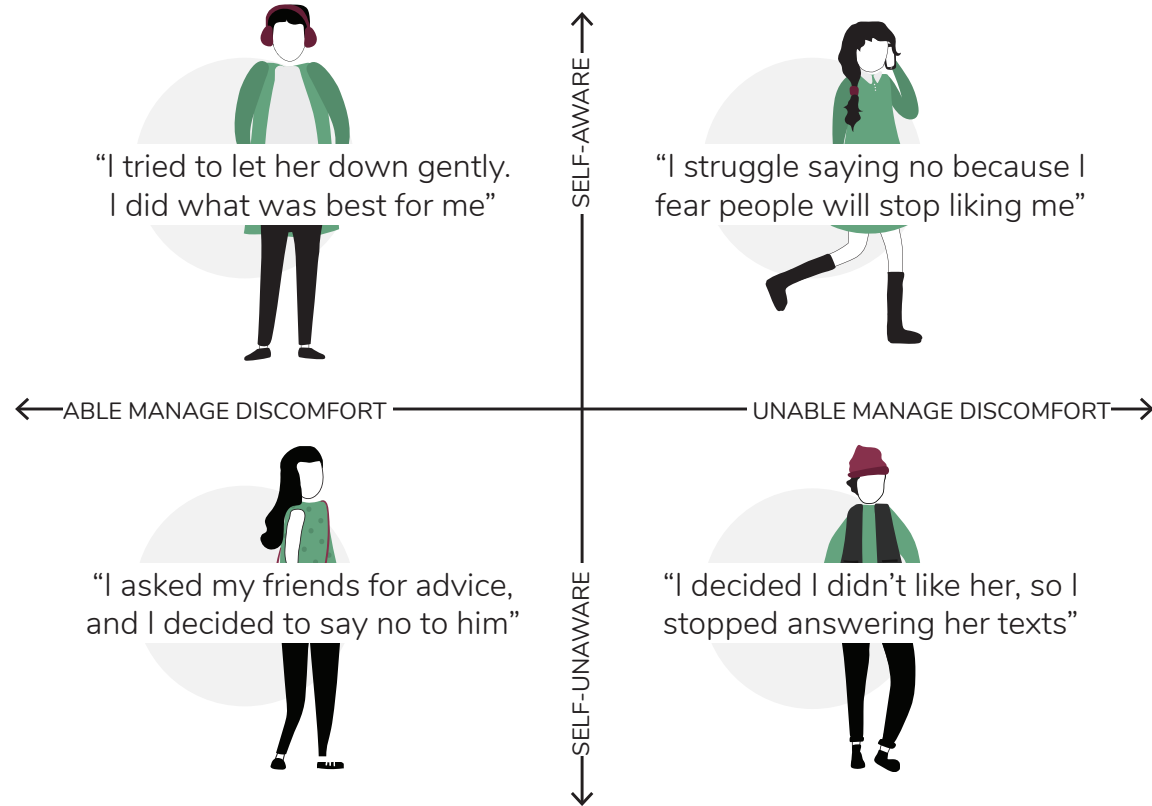
The envisioned situation

In the envisioned scenario, society sees the rejection as an opportunity to grow rather than a tragedy. It is essential to mention that the shift of interpretation does not remove the pain or negative emotions that could characterize the experience of a rejection. On the contrary, those feelings are seen as one of the pillars of personal growth by finding strength and resilience through difficulties. Therefore, the experience of the pain shifts from the ego to the heart. A less shameful and more open image of rejection can lead more people to share their story openly and create a more realistic environment on social media. Moreover, it can bring communities to find spaces and modalities to have conversations about the “No”. Therefore, educators can be seen as more reliable and teenagers can be in contact with other testimonies and perspectives. The confrontation should help in the development of knowledge and skills to deal with rejection on the interpersonal level. Teenagers could find it easier to support themselves and each other, welcome the negative emotions, and empathize with others. Finally, on the individual level, the awareness that they are not the only one going through a similar experience could reduce the threshold in seeking help and the isolation feeling. As a consequence, teenagers could be facilitated in reflecting on their experience, become more self-aware and grow.

14. Envisioned situation

3.4 | Personas

After the analysis, the selected parameters were self-awareness and ability to manage discomfort. From the research and the teenagers' diaries, it resulted that teenagers who are aware of their emotions and able to manage the discomfort generated by them reacted in a healthier way to a no. In the following scheme, it is possible to see how the combination of the selected parameters created four different profiles. For each profile, it is reported a quote from the research that highlights the difference between their approaches to rejection.



15. Four profiles

To give a more substantial character and enrich the profiles, for each personas, a small bio section and a like/dislike boxes were inserted. Moreover, some biographic data are shown in the right corner as it is possible to see in the example on page 71. For clarity, only one developed personas is shown; however, all four are visible in the Appendix I.

Bio

Omar spends a lot of time outside because at home, he fights a lot with his parents. He hangs out with his friends, but they don't speak about personal matters. His dream is to be famous.

Characteristics

Self aware

Able managing discomfort

Openness

Age: 17
Gender: Male
Interests: Skating
 Sneakers
 Music

Omar

“I decided I didn't like her, so I stopped answering her texts”

Likes

To have fun with his friends: go skating and hanging out outside

Dislikes

When someone ask too personal questions or brags with him

3.5 | Main Takeaways

Rejection Taboo

The ego tends to erase narratives that are not flattering or where a person is not the winner of the situation. Therefore, any open and honest conversation about rejection is avoided creating a taboo around it. The missing conversations have repercussions in teenagers' life and experiences.

Relevant factors

Self-awareness and ability of managing discomfort are essential factors in reacting to a rejection. Teenagers more aware of their emotions and their triggers responded better to a rejection, seeing also the bright side and the opportunity to grow.

Community

Communities, such as the school, are places where conversations about rejection can happen, but right now they don't. Moreover, communities include different people with various experiences and backgrounds. The heterogeneity can assure multiple perspective and the number a good snowball effect. Therefore, the community level is interesting to explore.

Design statement

The design statement chapter represents the connection between the two diamonds (see paragraph 1.3). It narrows down the scope defining the goal, and, at the same time, it creates room for diverging again in the ideation phase (chapter 5). The chapter is composed mainly of two parts: at the beginning, the design goal is defined, while in the second part the interaction vision is explained.

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4.1 | Introduction

After structuring the material gained in the research phase and defining the context model and the possible approaches, it was necessary to select a focus to continue through the design process. Consequently, it was decided to base the design solution on the community level as reported in the Define main take-aways section. The assumption behind the decision is that designing on the community level will have two advantages. First, it can give enough skills to teenagers to make a change in a long term scenario. Secondly, it is a manageable intervention given the time and resources planned for the graduation project. To make concrete the focus, a design goal and an interaction vision were formulated.

4.2 | Design goal

The definition of the design goal was composed of mainly two correlated phases. At the beginning, following the SID methodology, it was determined the desired behaviour that the design should support. After, based on the behaviour, a design goal was formulated.

Desired Behaviour

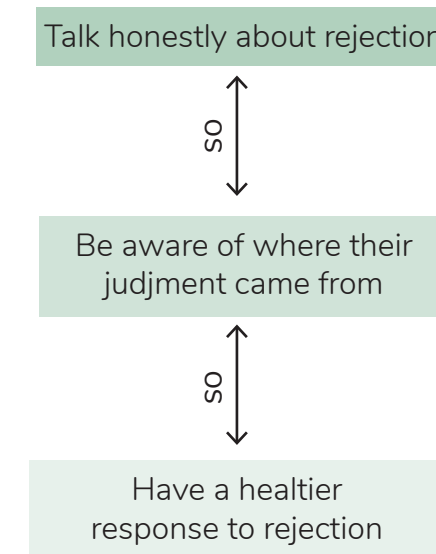
According to the research rejection is perceived as a taboo with negative consequences for the teenagers' sentimental health. Therefore, the chosen behaviour was: "Talk openly about rejection". After defining the behaviour, the structure visible in figure 17 was used to deepen the statement. The scheme helped in analyzing the short and long term values added by the wished behaviour to the individual and the collective. In this way, it was possible to verify that the desired behaviour has not more downsides than benefits.

17. Evoked values scheme

	Individual	Collective
Long term	+ Maturity + Autenticity	+ Sexual health + Non-judgmental mindset
Short term	+ Awareness - Discomfort	

As the scheme shows, the positives values overcome the negative ones. In particular, in the short term, the teenagers gain awareness on themselves, others and possibly societal schemes influencing their behaviours. This exploration could cause some discomfort. However, in a long term scenario, the awareness will lead to a more mature and conscious experience with a romantic relationship. Moreover, the identification of societal construct as such could bring more freedom of self-expression and authenticity. About the collectives added values, talk openly about rejection could positively influence the mindset, making less judgmental and improve the sexual health of teenagers.

Furthermore, to better articulate the behaviour that the design goal wishes to support, a ladder was created as visible in figure 18.



The ladder has three layers: all three levels are iterations of the same behaviour with different levels of specificity. The steps were ideated to create a complete overview and help in the later stage to have a specific focus for the intervention (concrete behaviour), but leaving room for ideation (abstract behaviour). Since all levels are interconnected with a double cause-effect link, the ladder is readable upwards or downwards.

18. Behaviour ladder

Design Goal

Therefore, the design goal was formulated.

To support a healthier attitude towards rejection, I want to empower teenagers to take the initiative in creating a space where they discuss rejection openly by using the media narrative as a trigger.

It presents three different elements. First, the social implication: in line with the initial assignment (paragraph 1.2), the design wants to support a healthier reaction to rejection to improve teenagers' mental and sexual health.

Secondly, the wished behaviour is reported and better contextualized. It is crucial to notice that teenagers will form the community and create a space for themselves. Based on the analysis and the input of the experts, it was decided to responsabilize the teenager in stepping up and breaking the taboo. The act of stepping up merges well with the rebellious attitudes that characterize adolescence and with teenagers' desire to be considered adults.

Finally, the mechanism triggering the behaviour is clarified. The use of media such as music or videos is based on the desire to choose a tool that adolescents feel comfortable with. It is already embedded in their culture, and it is a strong way of self-expression. Moreover, it can also resonate with the target portion that has not experienced a rejection yet.

4.3 | Interaction vision

To shape the idea of the desired interaction, an interaction vision was developed. The interaction vision is a metaphor representing a situation with similar characteristics to the desired one. This tool helped in shaping the envisioned interaction and, consequently, it was kept in consideration for the ideation and validation of the design.

Music festivals are a fun experience, where different points of attractions are offered to participants that can choose to roam around as they wish. Moreover, in festivals there is a community sense and, generally, people are more open-minded and keen to have new experiences. Therefore, the interaction is fun, autonomous and inspiring.

The chosen interaction vision for the project is: "I want the interaction between the users of my design to be like the one between participants in an outdoor music festival".



19. Interaction vision

4.4 | Main Takeaways

Talk about rejection

The behaviour that the design wished to support is to talk openly about the rejection so teenagers can be aware of where their judgment comes from, start reflecting about it and with the new awareness reacting healthier to rejection.

Character of interaction

The interaction with the final design should be fun, so teenagers are willing to do it. It should be inspiring to lead them in the reflection and also not guided to avoid the school feeling and to have any moderator, or figure in charge of the experience.

Develop

The Develop chapter reports all activities focused on defining the outcome and its characteristics. The chapter starts with an introduction to the activities followed by the explanation of the methodologies and procedures used. After, the different iterations of the design are shown and explained as a result. Finally, in the discussion section the design choices are examined, and decisions are made leading to the final design.

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5.1 | Introduction

After narrowing down the scope with the definition of a design goal and interaction vision, the ideation started entering a new diverge phase. To assure diversity and to avoid fixating with a singular idea, different activities involving designers, experts and teenagers were organized. The inputs provided a fresh perspective and reflection cues. During this phase, mainly three designs were ideated and used as a trigger for discussion in the activities mentioned above. In the end, the design requirements are formulated.

5.2 | Methodology

Three different activities were done in this phase. Differently from other phases of the project, the activities had various goals to boost the project in different moments of ideation, as explained in the following paragraphs.

Co-creation session

The goal of the co-creation was to expose the project focus and the design goal to teenagers, think together of a solution and analyse their needs through their ideas (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). By being in charge of the design, users had the opportunity to express their preferences directly and communicate indirectly what was essential for them by implementing or not in their design.

The session was held online via Zoom and in total, six teenagers of sixteen and seventeen years old participated. The meeting was divided into three phases and lasted around 60 minutes. First, a brief introduction of the project, the goal and design scenario was presented to give ground knowledge and the information necessary to understand the context and the design scenario. In the second phase, teenagers were split in couples, and the co-creation exercise took place. Participants were provided with a possible procedure by six steps and stimuli such as icons or shapes to create their design. Finally, the group was reunited, and each couple presented their design to others, followed by a collective discussion. The full results are visible in Appendix J.

20. Session timetable

Time	Activity	Goal
15min	Presentation	Provide teenagers with ground information about the project
30min	Creation	Designing the space and its features
20min	Discussion	Exhibit the different ideas and understanding the thinking behind the design

Experts feedback

A round of expert interviews was done to include the perspective of the experts on the direction and the first prototype done after the co-creation session. Three experts from different fields participate in individual 60min interviews. Each interview was structured to receive feedback on three different levels: the design goal, the prototype structure and the envisioned interaction with it. In the design goal section, the experts were presented with the context model (chapter 3). The discussion focused on the goal and its consequences for the design. In the second section, the prototype was presented, and the structure was analyzed. Experts gave their feedback on how the content was divided and the features of the prototype. Finally, in the interaction part, the feedback focused on how teenagers should interact with each other or with possible moderators. The full interview structure is visible in Appendix K.

Ideation session

After the first two activities, the design goal and interaction vision were iterated and changed. Therefore, a brainstorm with four designers was organized to diverge and ideate possible interventions. Four designers were involved in an online session of 90 minutes. The session consisted of two brainstorms terminating with the creation of a morphological chart (Roozenburg, 1995). The first brainstorm aimed to list all activities teenagers appreciate, while the second focused all possible means to talk about rejection. In the end, four activities and four means were selected, creating a matrix that designers filled with ideas on how to merge the specific activity with a particular means to discuss rejection. The complete results are visible in Appendix L.

5.3 | Design iterations

Thanks to the inputs from the activities, it was possible to iterate multiple times on the design. In particular, three stages in the design process are highlighted because of their relevance in the project. For each stage, a description of the design, the feedback received, and the conclusions are reported.

Sharing experience platform

Description. One of the first ideas was a Sharing experiences platform where teenagers could get in contact with youth that already lived their situation, and remember what it was like. The platform is divided into two sections: in the first one, all experiences by youth are displayed and available for teenagers to read. While the second section is more interactive, providing the teenagers with the possibility to confront each other in small groups with a moderator. This division is designed to facilitate teenagers in their journey to face rejection. First, teenagers can navigate through the experiences quickly and then step up and start talking in one chat.



21. Sharing experience platform

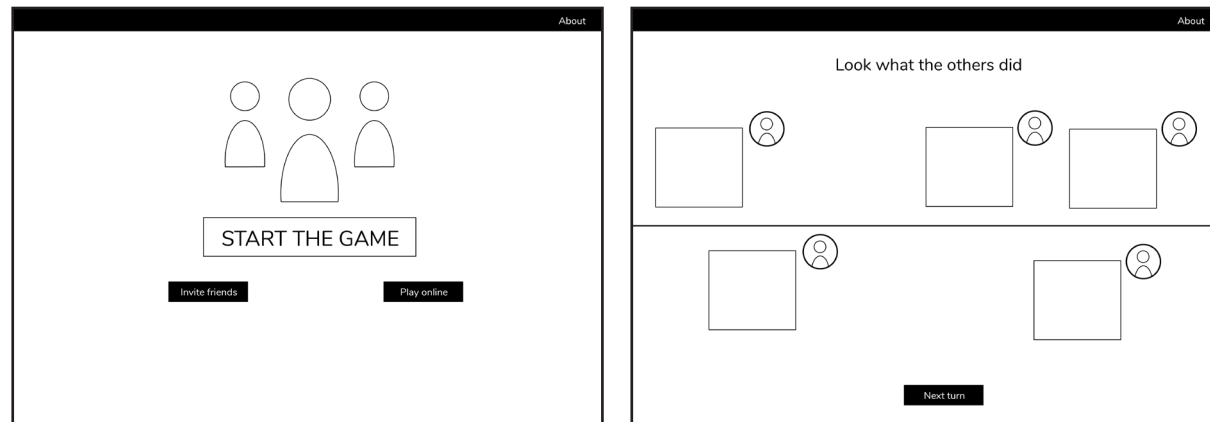
Feedback. According to the experts, the two sections felt like two different spaces without a strong connection. Moreover, the threshold to move from a passive setting to an active one was still high. Concerning the interaction with the platform, different points arose. First, concerning the sensibility of the topic and the age of the users, privacy and safety should be taken into significant consideration. Especially in the second section

where teenagers can chat, it is important to ensure safety without compromising the privacy that will allow teenagers to speak freely. Secondly, the value of the youth was questioned. The presence of youth can help teenagers to feel more at ease, but the volunteer should be prepared to handle difficult conversations. Youth has the responsibility to assist the teenagers and manage delicate confessions, and therefore it is important that they have the skills and knowledge to do such things. Moreover, the design fosters a paternalistic approach where youth guided teenagers in the journey. The guided experience is in disagreement with the independence desire that characterized adolescence, and it doesn't allow the teenager to take responsibility for the platform and therefore of the change that the platform champion. Finally, the current design discusses rejection on an emotional level. Teenagers and youth are asked to tell their personal story and think about the emotions they felt and why they experienced. However, this approach can be particularly problematic because it raises the threshold and requires people able to moderate such emotional stories, as mentioned before.

Conclusions. Two main conclusions were drawn. First, a shift of approach was decided: from the previous emotional angle to a cultural one. The focus, therefore, shifted from reflecting on how I experienced rejection to reflecting on how society considers and deals with rejection. In particular, it was decided to use the media as a tool to represent how society deals with rejection. Since media need to resonate with a broad audience, they are a great tool to analyze what the common and popular opinions are and what is considerate to be normal. Moreover, they are strong self-expression means used by teenagers to construct their identity. Therefore the target is familiar and well acquainted with them. Secondly, youth participation was removed from the design; instead, it was decided to empower teenagers. The space will not guide the teenagers in the reflection, but it will provide them with the tools and knowledge to create their own space and discuss rejection.

Gaming based platform

Description. A Gaming based platform was designed to engage teenagers online and create a less serious mood around the topic. On the platform, the teenagers could connect online and play a session with strangers or invite their friends. In the session, teenagers were asked to judge rejector scenes from the media. First, they will grade a scene alone, and after everybody finishes, the other grades will be visible to all the players. In the ideal scenario, teenagers would challenge others in their leisure time, having fun but also reflecting on how the media portrait rejection.



22. Gaming based platform

Feedback. Having fun elements can help in engaging teenagers. However, transforming the activity in a game could damage the end goal of the activity. The aim is to make adolescents reflect on how the media narrates rejection, but introducing game dynamics shifts the focus from the reflection to the desire of winning. Moreover, the gaming approach has the potential to engage more teenagers. Still, to do that the game dynamics need to be exciting, challenging, and the focus of the experience becomes only having fun. Moreover, an online game and in general, only an online platform, need to continually add new elements or change some dynamics to keep the users engaged. This constant fueling can be hard to maintain, resulting in a fast disengagement of teenagers. Finally, from the teenagers' feedback emerge that in their leisure time, they spend a lot of time connected, but not engaging in a group activity like this game. Adolescents said that the only time they played games together was in offline gatherings and parties. On the other hand, the action of judging and grading was perceived as immediate, easy to do and could trigger an interesting discussion.

Conclusions. The primary outcome from this iteration was that even if fun elements should be inserted, transforming any activity into a game would lead to a shift of focus. Moreover, based on teenagers' comments on meeting offline, it was decided to explore the option of an online platform for offline gatherings. In agreement with the research, offline interaction could support more in-depth discussion and help teenagers in improving their critical thinking and debating skills. Abilities that are harder to develop online since few people engage others' opinions with an open and curious approach.

Empower teenagers platform

Description. After elaborating the feedback from the previous prototypes, a new platform was ideated. The general idea behind is to provide construction blocks for a workshop to teenagers that are interested in the topic and willing to create a space to involve other teenagers. Therefore, the aim of the platform is to collect and present in an easy and accessible way the different tools to allow teenagers to build their workshop. All activities were pre-existing and collected from different platforms, toolkits and generative exercises designed to involve teenagers in reflecting on a topic. The activities are divided into three sections as a dining menu: starters, main dish and dessert. In the starter section: energizer and icebreaker are reported, the main dish section lists more demanding activity, while the dessert part presents concluding activities.

23. Empower teenagers platform



Feedback. Overall, the platform does not feel designed for teenagers. The activities listed are designed to be used with an adult as moderator. Substituting this figure with teenagers does not remove the pyramid power dynamics that can be tricky with teenagers. The responsibility is not shared equally among all participants, but relies only on the moderator. As a consequence, the moderator has a significant pressure on their shoulders, and if other teenagers don't see them as a valid leader, the exercise is compromised. On the other hand, investing a peer with power could result in dysfunctional power dynamics where the moderator uses their responsibility improperly to diminish other participants. Moreover, all activities have a traditional setting: they are offline and discussion-based. This characteristic mismatch with the digital pop culture teenagers are immersed in. In addition to that, the activities have only one correct way to be performed. Teenagers need to follow the steps provided in the platform, and during the workshop all participants should participate in the activities. The strict structure, the mandatory aspect and the traditional setting resulted in a school feeling that can compromise the workshop itself. School can be perceived as boring and unpleasant, giving the same attributes to the workshop could lead the participants to think that the workshop itself is not interesting. Finally, it is important to mention that the concept does not work without a small group of teenagers committed to use the tools and create the space. This group needs to be passionate about the topic, think that discussing can be helpful and willing to organize the workshop during schools or in their leisure time. All these characteristics make it difficult to find and involve the target.

Conclusions. It is possible to conclude on four main points. First, power dynamics and group dynamics in adolescence need to be taken carefully into account. As highlighted in the research phase, the peers is a crucial context for teenagers, and the design should take this relevance into account. Therefore, the platform should provide the same responsibility and authority to all teenagers. Secondly, the "school feeling" should be avoided. The execution of the activities should be volunteer, open and possibly fun. Game elements or a joking mood can help to involve teenagers; however, a good balance should be found between seriousness and fun. Thirdly, the activities must be merged in the teenagers' environments: involving their language and using

the tools they already know how to navigate and use. Moreover, as the menu theme was not strong enough, it is crucial to find a common thread to present the activity coherently and engagingly.

In conclusion, even keeping into consideration the flaws just mentioned, the structure and idea of the empower teenagers platform seemed promising and therefore was the selected structure to continue with.

5.4 | Design requirements

In conclusion, through the iterative process the characteristic that the final design should have became clear. Therefore it was decided that the final output should:

- Be appealing to the target
- Take into account group dynamics
- Be an online platform for offline gatherings
- Be organized, but leaving freedom to the users

The design requirements are explained further in the following paragraphs.

Be appealing to the target

Firstly, the design should be interesting for teenagers from sixteen to nineteen years-old. Therefore, the approach should be fun, but not ridiculous or too juvenile. The visual and the language should be clear, but informal and inserted in their context. Finally, it should engage teenagers in environments familiar to them, such as social media.

Take into account group dynamics

The research (“Peers as microsystem”, page 44) and the feedback sessions showed how designing for teenagers means developing specific group dynamics. As a consequence, the design should facilitate healthy group dynamics creating a safe space where teenagers feel free to express their opinion without being ridiculed or judged.

Be an online platform for offline gatherings

As mentioned before, offline meetings offer a better chance to express yourself and take responsibility for your words and behaviours. On the other hand, to make the project better reachable and target the teenagers in the space where they connect the most, the platform should be based online. The design should achieve this balance to satisfy both the design goal and the target needs and preferences.

Be organized, but leaving freedom to the users

To avoid the “school feeling” that diminishes the engagement of teenagers, the level of structure and freedom need to be designed carefully. First, the design should provide various activities to the initiators, so they could choose which one is the most suitable for their gatherings. Secondly, the activity itself is structured, but there should not be a wrong way to do it or a strict step by step guide. Moreover, if the gathering is large, the design should offer the possibility to have more activity running at the same time to let participants free to choose.

5.5 | Main Takeaways

Use of personal experience

Reflecting on personal experience is a powerful means to develop awareness and critical sense. However, discussing on a personal level is difficult because the possibilities to be triggered and retreat in defensive mode are high. Therefore, a means to discuss rejection that doesn't focus mainly on personal experiences should be found.

Avoid therapy

To involve more effectively teenagers, therapy feeling should be avoided. Therapy is still surrounded by a stigma that makes people see it as something necessary for people that have problems. Therefore it increases the threshold. Elements that favour the therapy interaction are: basing the conversation on feelings or an emotive level, and the guided interaction where there is one person in charge of the flow and content of the conversation.

Avoid school

School is mandatory, and most teenagers see it as a duty more than an opportunity. Therefore, the final design should not recreate the same feeling. Elements that contribute to the school sensation are the absence of funny components, mandatory elements and a strict structure in the experience.

Need of a theme

To involve teenagers, create coherence and interest in the final design, a theme, or angle, is needed. "Promoting healthy relationships" or "improving the experience with rejection" is not strong enough, and it doesn't appeal to the majority of teenagers.

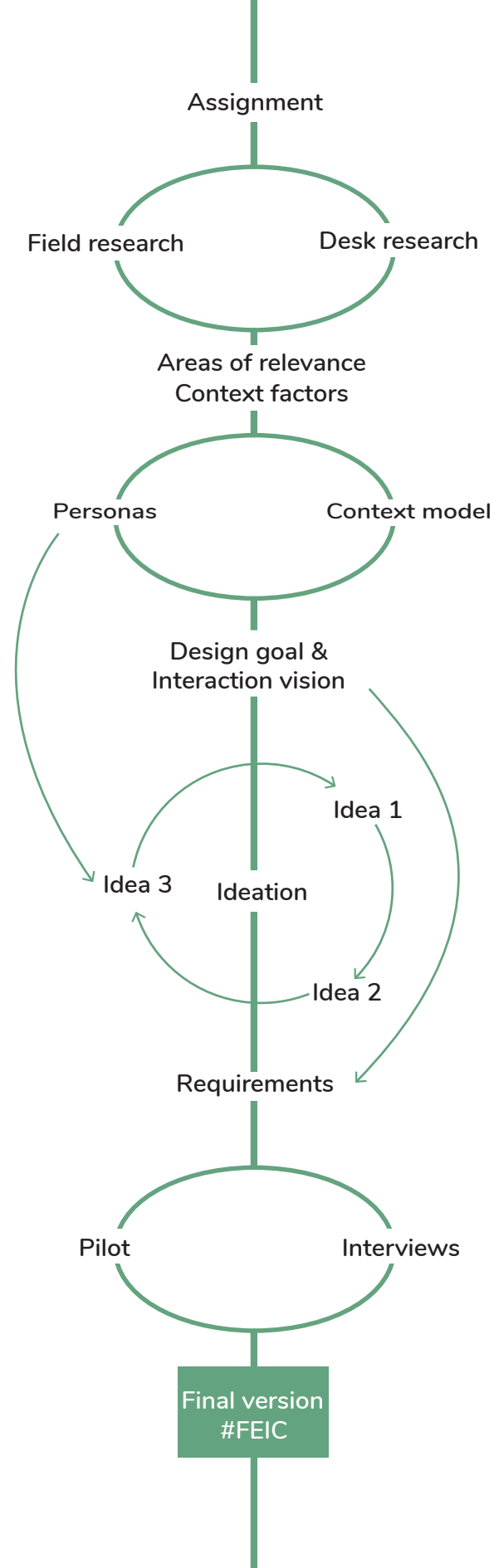
Teenagers for teenagers

The design should promote activity initiated by teenagers for teenagers. Having a moderator or guide will result in therapy or school feeling and fewer ownership of the design. To empower the users, teenagers need to feel in charge of the interaction and the change the design want to promote.

#FEIC

Chapter Six aims to introduce the final design - #FEIC, an online platform to provide tools and inspiration to teenagers to organize activities to talk openly about rejection. In the following sections, the service is explored on different levels. First, the main theme is explained. After, the storyboard is used to show the envisioned experience. Finally, a description of the structure and characteristics is provided.

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6.1 | Introduction

The following section reports the final output of the master thesis. The concept is the result of the integration of insights from the different activities performed throughout the project and explained in past chapters. To provide an overview, the figure 24 shows a simplified summary of the design process followed until the final service proposal.

24. Project overview

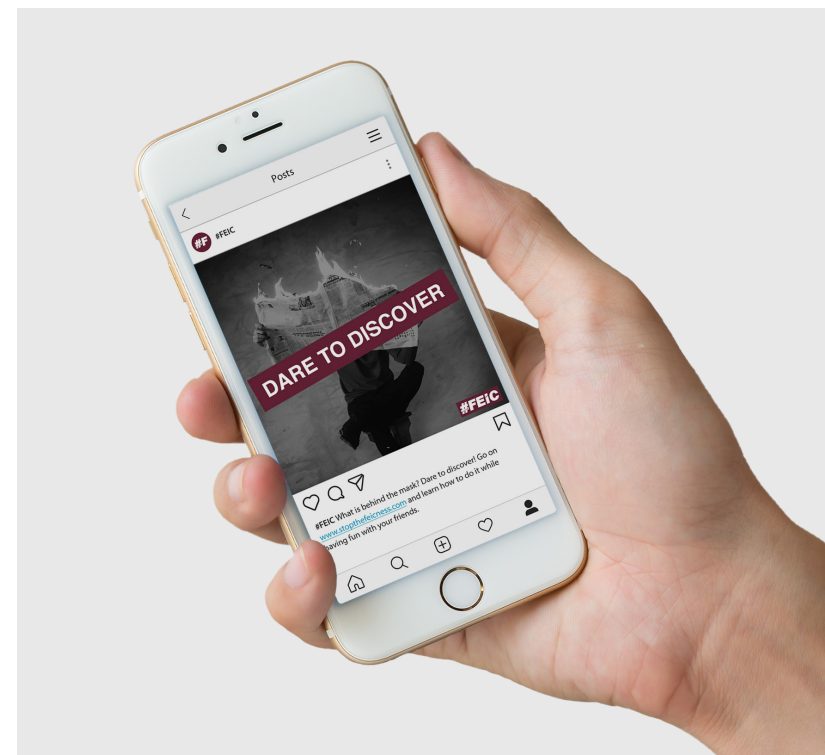
6.2 | Spot the fakeness

After deciding to work with the media, an angle was needed since the media itself was not sufficient to attract teenagers' attention, as discovered in the previous chapter. The concept of fakeness was chosen.

Spot the fakeness is the interpretation key used to analyze the media. For this purpose, it is considered "Fake" everything that doesn't match with the reality or the expectation of it. What is real or fake depends upon personal experience, mind setting and the environment where a person is inserted. Therefore in this field, what is fake and what not is a personal opinion. Its subjectivity is one of the factors that makes fakeness an interesting concept for teenagers. Not having a "right" answer opens and stimulates debate, forcing teenagers into leaving a black and white vision and thinking more nuanced.

Moreover, it is interesting to observe that, as found in the research, the constant stream of information and the possibility to easily contribute to that stream with social media posts or blogs make it harder and harder to distinguish Fake from True. This difficulty experienced on societal level makes the concept of fakeness more relevant and attractive especially to teenagers since they are given the possibility to improve in the ability to spot the fakeness, while other generations, as Baby Boomers, struggle with it. This generational difference and the opportunity to criticize the media give to the design a rebellious tone that well matches with the character of adolescence. Teenagers can exercise their ability to spot fakeness as a way to step out of pre-existing societal dynamics and feeling not only above them but also able to change them.

Finally, this interpretation allows for fun and light-hearted dynamics. The concept of fake is easy to grasp, already inserted in our society (e.g. the fake news idea promoted by President Trump) and it has a disruptive mood. As a consequence, these characteristics make it simple to play around with the concept funnily.



25. Examples of communication about the idea of fakeness

6.3 | Overall Structure

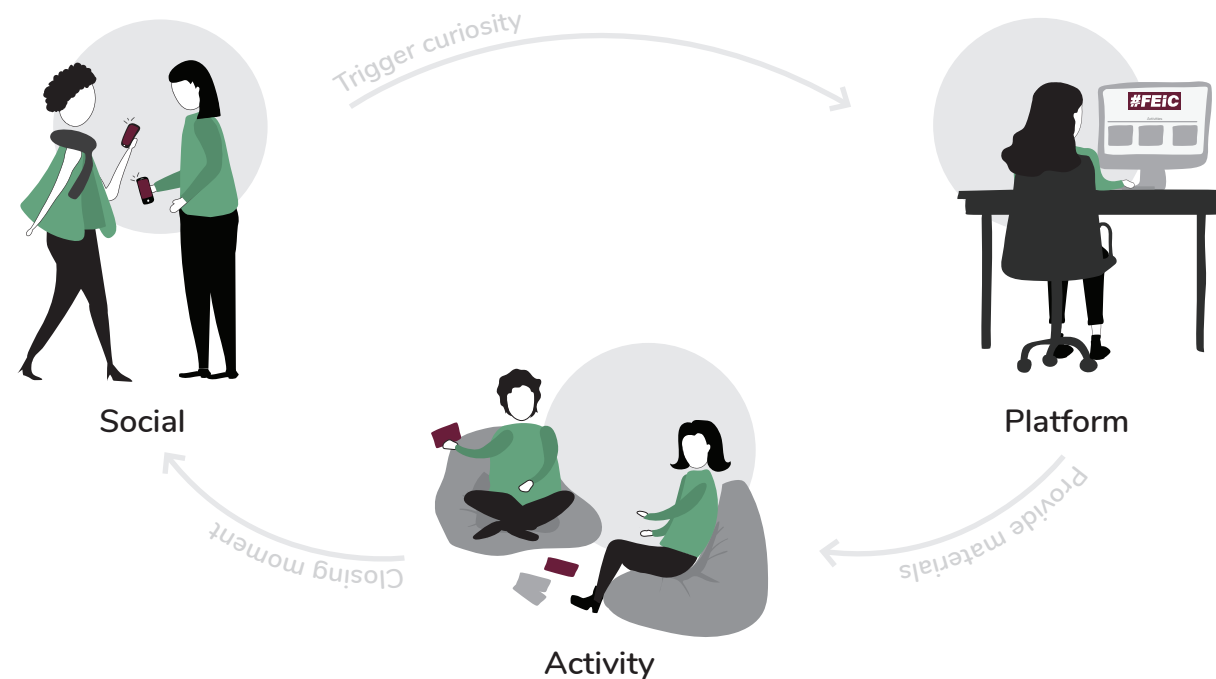
The final service was built around the idea of using the fakeness in media narratives of rejection as a conversation starter to stimulate critical thinking and create awareness around strict and unhealthy narratives. The following paragraph reports a brief overview of the structure and management of the service.

Service components

#FEIC is a service system composed of two parts: a platform and a social profile. The two components have different aims, but work together to communicate the project correctly, make it attractive and clear to the target and provide teenagers with the tools to spot the fakeness.

The platform is web-based, and its main aims are to explain the project, its goal and provide the material to perform the activity. On the other hand, the social profile (Instagram) aims to promote the project in an environment familiar to teenagers and trigger their curiosity about #FEIC. Moreover, to reinforce the connection between the elements, the Instagram page reports also the conclusion post result from the activity. The combination of the two parts and their relation with the activity is visible in figure 26.

26. Components synergy



Management

The service is addressed to teenagers, but managed by a small group of volunteers of all ages. Having a small group of moderators and content creators facilitate the management of the service and assure consistency and coherency to the communication strategy.

The platform managers are in charge of:

- Check if in the free comment areas under the activities there are unrelated or offensive comments
- Check if the pages are running smoothly and fix them otherwise
- Update new “rejection media fragment” monthly

The social media platform managers are in charge of:

- Curate the Instagram feed: post images with engaging quotes to trigger curiosity about the platform, repost Teenagers “closing post” from the activity.
- Answer to comments under Instagram posts and stories
- Check if the communication strategy is still engaging and compelling to attract teenager in using the platform

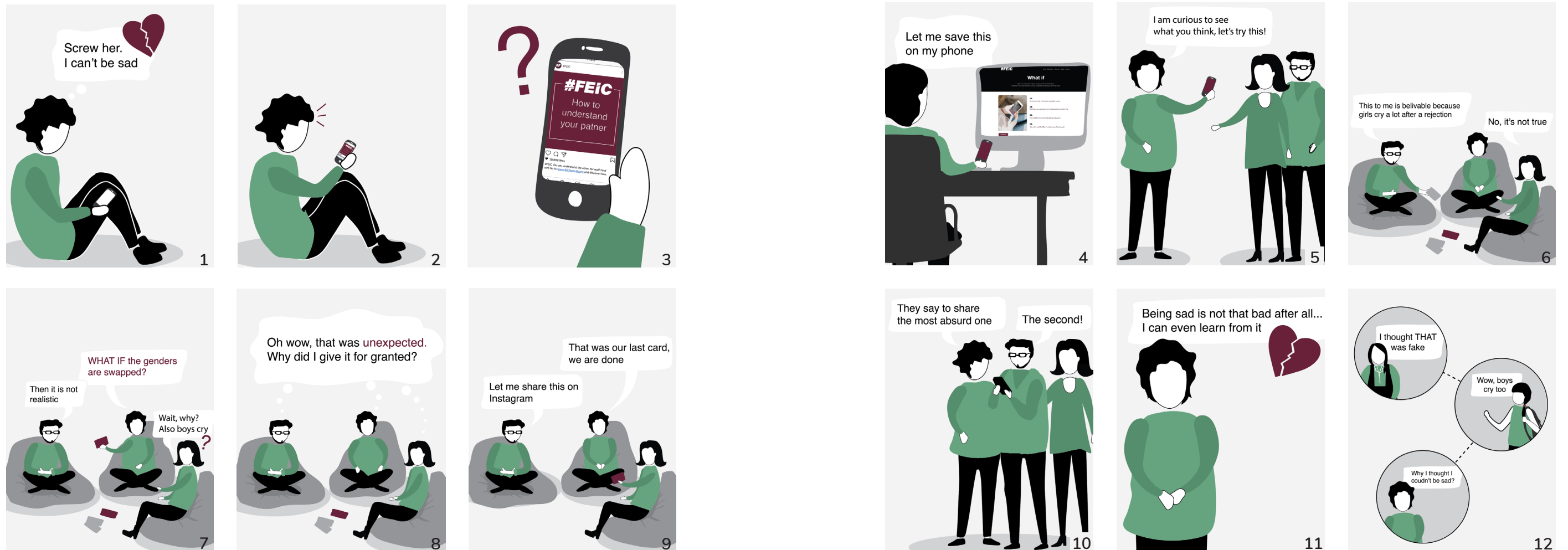
6.4 | Service experience

To better illustrate how the service works and how the elements work together, a storyboard was created (figure 27).

First, teenagers are triggered by the Instagram post of #FEIC. Using the link in the post, they can reach the platform. Here, they can read about the project and start looking at the small videos extracted from movies and tv series. When they are acquainted with the idea, the service suggests organizing a gathering. Therefore, they can download the material physically or digitally, invite their friends over and try the activity. During the activity, they

can confront themselves about the fakeness level of the stimulus, and spice the conversation with the “what if” questions that make them reflect on how and why their opinion changes with the variations of specific elements (gender, age, place etc.). After they finish the cards, teenagers are asked to share on Instagram one stimulus with a varied element that they found particularly amusing, funny or interesting. When the activity is finished, teenagers start thinking more in-depth about the discussion with their friend and being more aware of their conditioning.

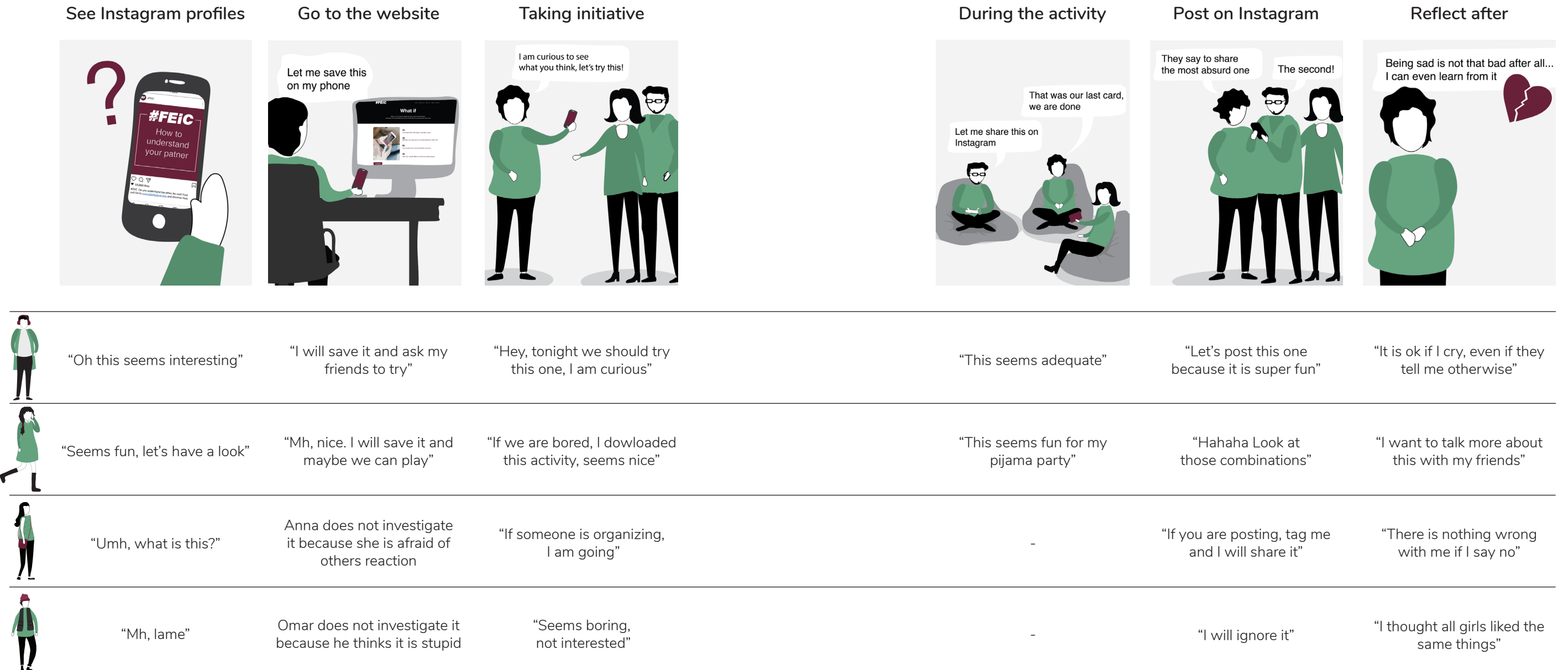
27. Storyboard



Personas experience

After defining the scenario of use, it was interesting to investigate how the different profiles highlighted with the personas (paragraph 3.4) would experience the service. Considering the different reactions helped in shaping some features of the service and enlarged the audience. In the figure 28 is shown how the four profiles react to the main phase of the scenario,

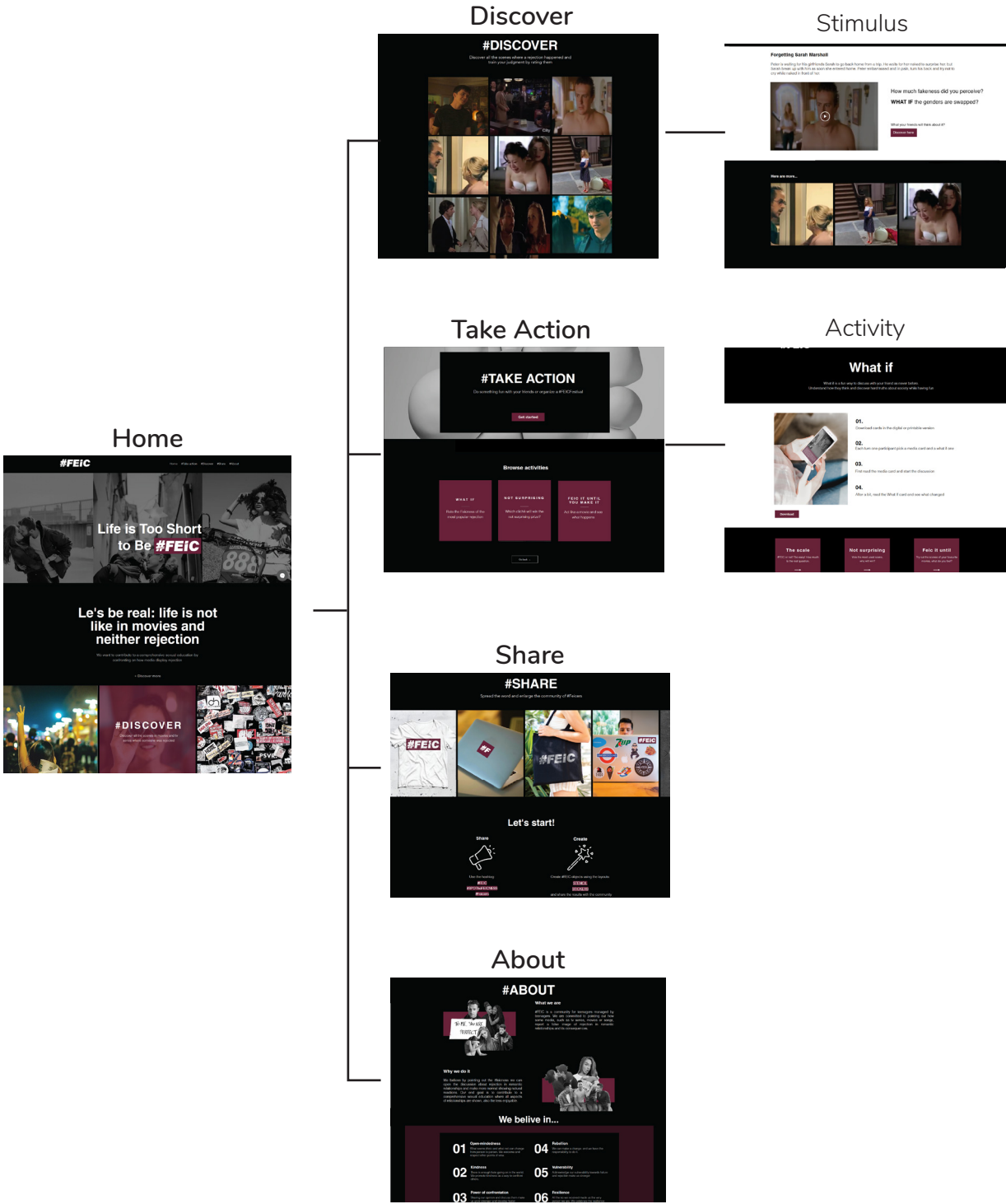
28. Personas experience



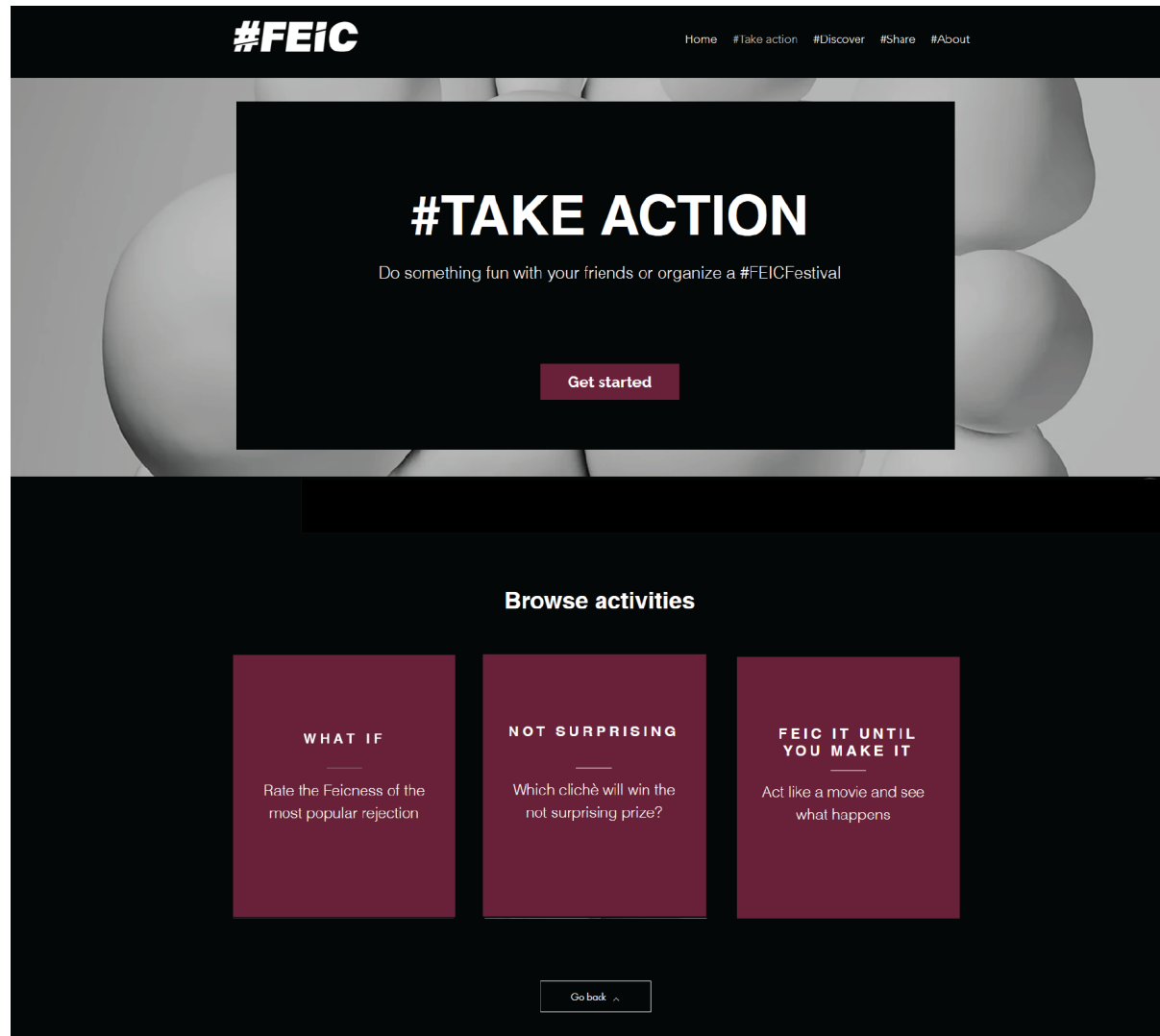
6.5 | The platform

The platform is the core of #FEIC. It gives teenagers the tools to organize the activity, #FEIC festivals, to discuss rejection in the media, and it creates the community around the service. To do so, the platform presents four sections. Each part has a specific function and goal that were designed based on the previous research and insights. The sections are: Take action, Explore, Promote and About. The platform architecture with the different parts is visible in the image 29. While in the following paragraphs, a brief description is given for each section, with a particular focus on Take Action and Explore because they are the main pillars of the concept.

29. Platform architecture



Take action



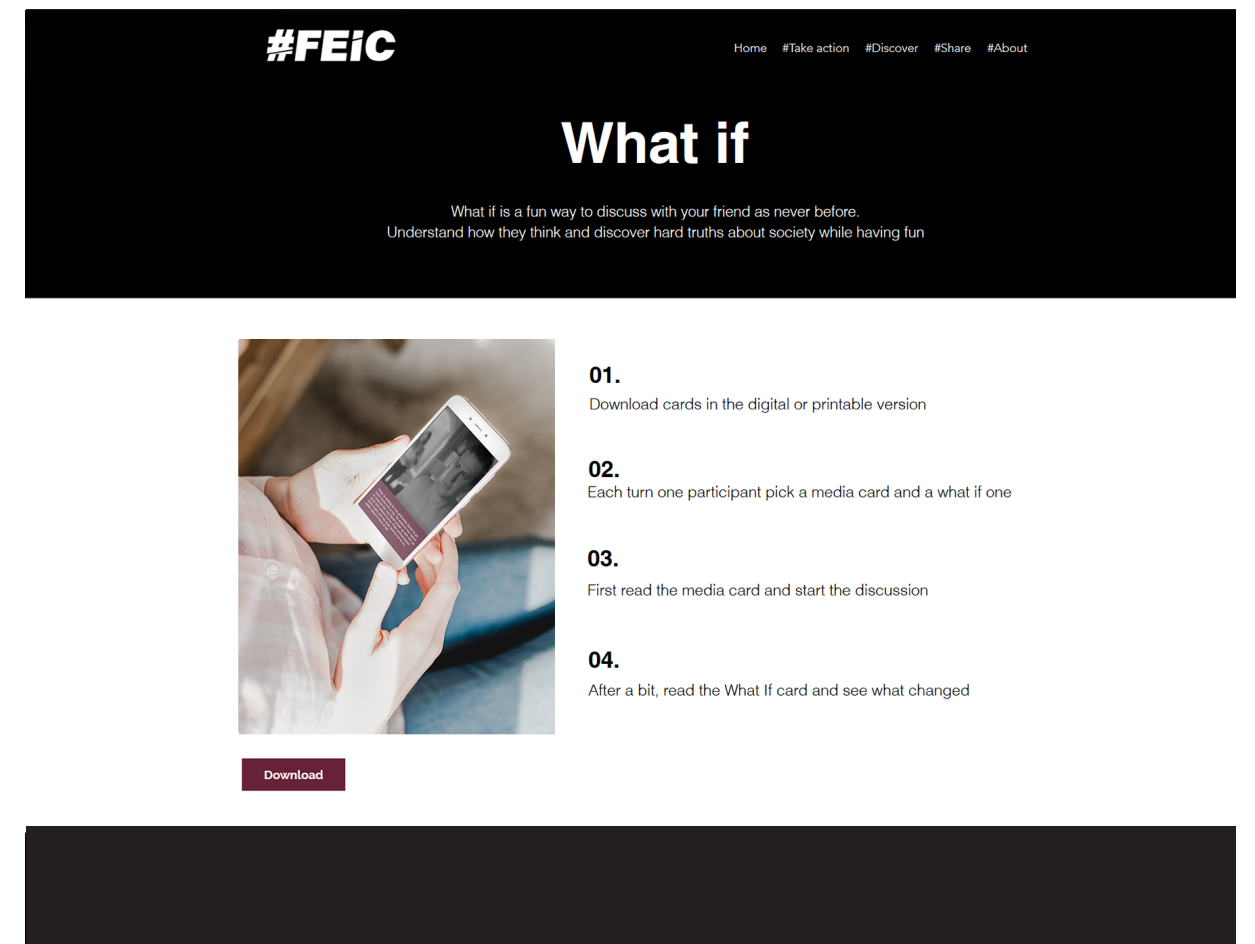
30. Take action page

The take action section is where teenagers can find the activities to do in gatherings. The platform showcased all activities on one page, allowing users to scroll through them quickly. For each activity a picture, the title and a one-line description are given to provide some ground information immediately. To better navigate the activities, a “get started button” is available. Clicking on the button a menu will open with three questions: how many people, the place of the gatherings and the preferred modalities (e.g. drawing, discussing, acting). After answering the questions, a selection of activities will be shown giving the user the possibility to choose.

All activities have the same end goal, which is to stimulate conversations about the media narratives of rejection. And they also want to encourage the discussion in a more interactive, unconventional and stimulating way. Furthermore, offering more activities gives the possibility to diversify the offer and therefore enlarge the audience and meet the taste of various teenagers. Moreover, giving a choice brings the user to think about what will be better received with their group and context. This process makes the teenager more secure of their choice and therefore it facilitates the sense of ownership.

When a user selects one activity, they enter in its page. Here, it is possible to see pictures of the teenagers playing the activity, a short explanation, the instructions and the material to download as visible in picture 31.

31. Activity page



The activity

In the current state of development, one main activity is designed and reported. The aim is stimulating conversation about rejection by pointing out how personal judgment can change with the variation of some elements. The activity is based on two types of stimulus: the Media and the What if cards. The Media cards report a screenshot from a movie with a brief explanation of the situation. The What if cards ask what will happens to the situation if an element is changed. For example, what happen if:

- The genders are swapped
- One of the two have ten years more
- Other friends are there

To increase the flexibility and lower the threshold of use, the cards exist in two versions: printable and digital. The draft of the printable dek is visible in Appendix M.

32. Digital and printed cards



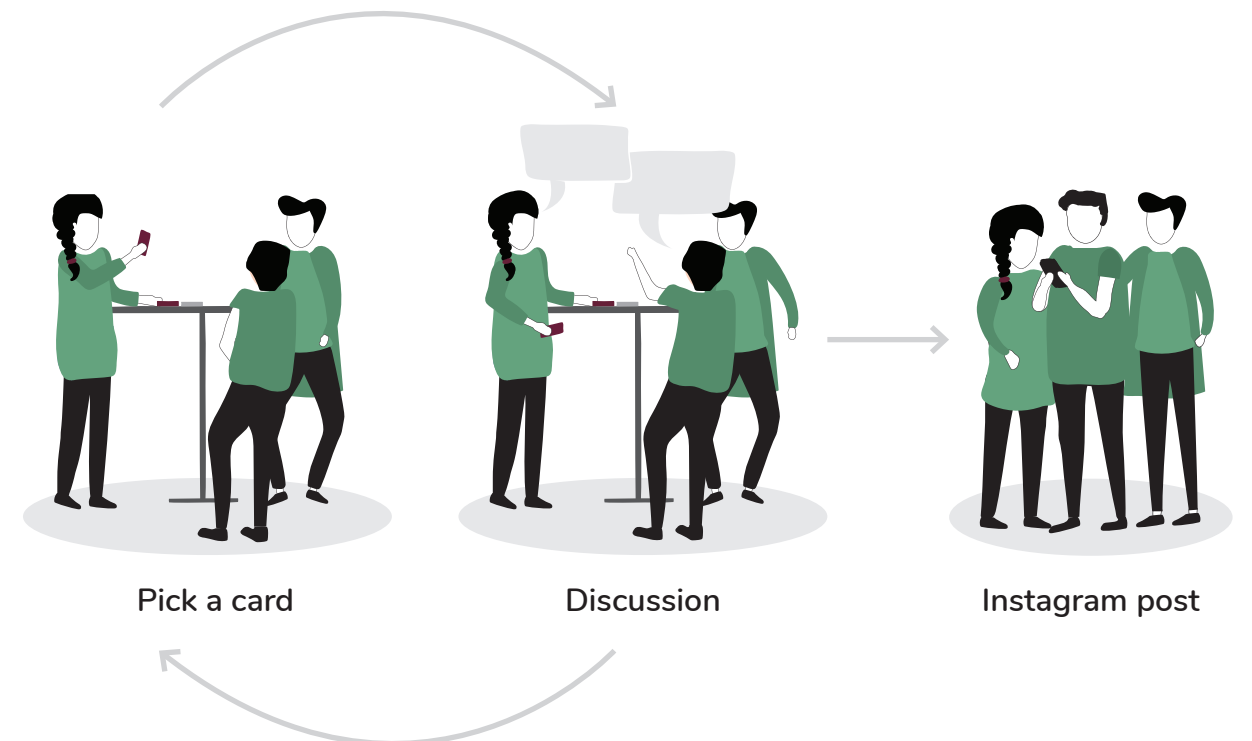
Each turn, a participant picks one of each card. After reading the Media card, they ask the question “how much fakeness is in this card?” leaving room for the argumentation of the others.

When they feel the discussion is towards the end, they can ask the What If question. In this way participants are invited to think again and to compare their new opinion with the previous one. The debate can now move on why and how the participants’ opinions have changed.

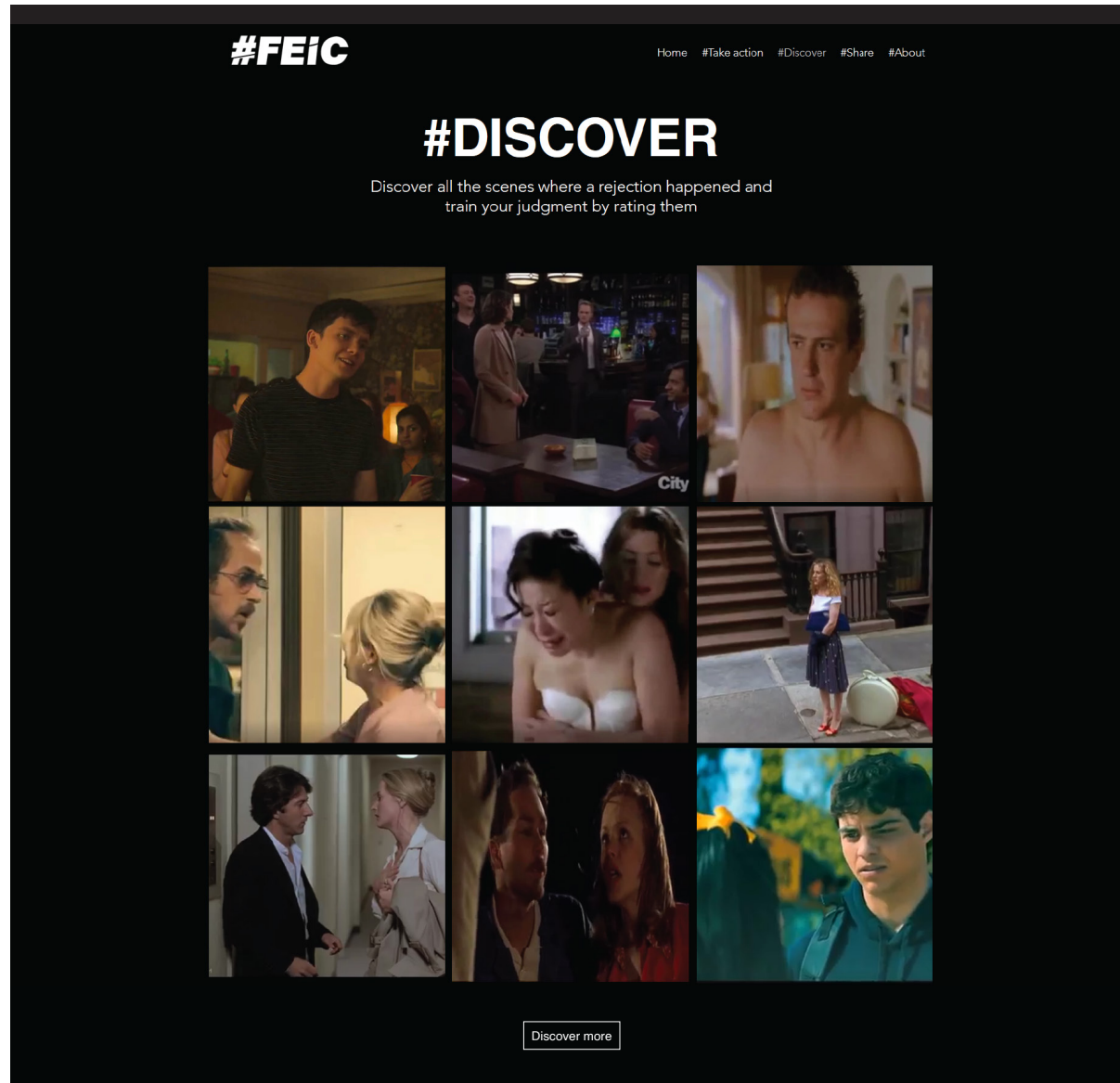
When the discussion is finished, the next participants can pick the new cards, until there are no cards left.

The last card asks the participant to share on Instagram the combination of media card and what if card they found more amusing, absurd or funny. The idea is that this will create a closing moment and teenagers will “compete” to find the most outstanding duo. In this way, they can contribute to the #FEIC community and inspire other teenagers in doing so.

33. Activity dynamic

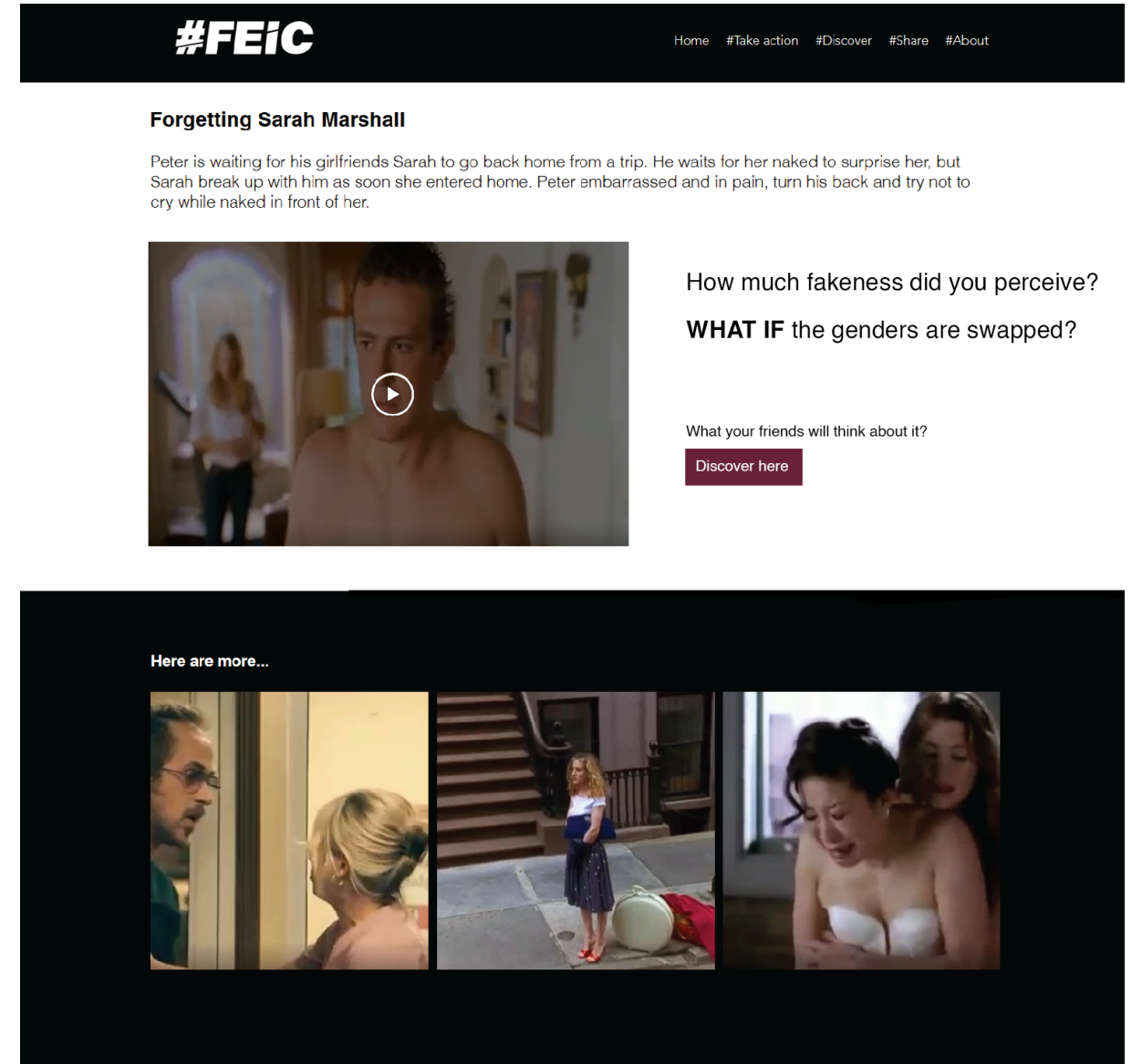


Discover



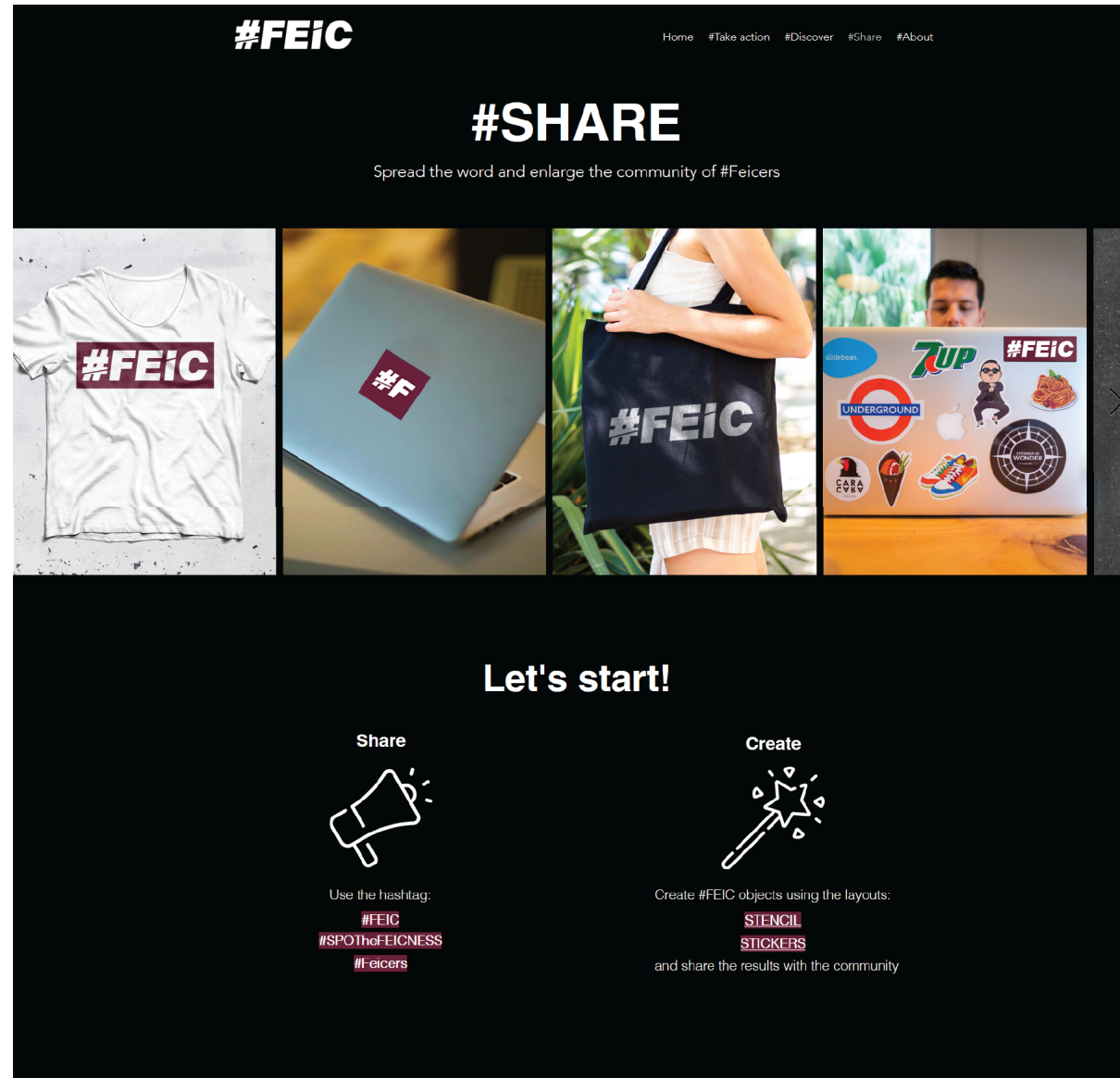
34. Discover page

The Discover section aims to showcase all material about rejection to get acquainted the teenagers with the idea of media narratives of rejection. All content used in the Take action activities (e.g. in the Media cards) is organized here to allow teenagers to take a look even if they are not involved in one activity as visible in picture 34.



For each stimulus it is presented: a short video, a small text that narrates what happens in the video and a “what if” question. The question aims to link the activity with the stimulus and to trigger further curiosity bringing teenagers to move to the Take Action section.

35. Stimulus page example



36. Share page

The Share section has the end goal to create a sense of belonging between the teenagers that want to organize a gathering. Moreover, the part wants to stimulate teenagers to share the project and enlarge its audience. To do so, a list of useful hashtags, stencil and stickers are provided.



In the about section, more information about the project is given. The page wants to explain the positioning of #FEIC in the panorama of resources and programs about Sentimental and Sexual health. Moreover, it tells the fundamental values of the community and the motivations that brought to its creation to lay solid foundations for the future development of the community. Finally, to clarify some points that could be unclear, an F.A.Q session is designed.

37. About page

6.6 | Social media

As mentioned before, the social profile mainly aims to promote the project by triggering curiosity about it. To do so, it uses two social media: Instagram and TikTok. Based on the teenagers' feedback, these social media are particularly popular, and adolescents spend a large amount of their leisure time on them. Moreover, since both focus on images or videos, they will adapt to the modalities of #FEIC.

To attract attention and increase the popularity of the project, the platform will provide small exercises in the form of challenges or small games. All tasks are based on pre/existing tools that the social media offers or they use dynamics familiar to the users of that platform.

In particular, two activities were designed as a starting point and are explained in the following part.

Instagram profile

With the development of the project, one of the main challenges was to communicate the project interestingly and encourage teenagers to use the service. To do so, an Instagram profile is created. Teenagers affirmed to take a lot of information from Instagram's profile and use the social media as almost a primary resource for information. Therefore, the #FEIC Instagram profile aims to: raise awareness on the problem, inform teenagers on the advantages of using the service, and showcase examples from teenagers that already have done the activity.

To raise awareness of the problem, the management team will create posts with a question regarding media narratives of rejection with accessible information in the post. Moreover, Instagram offers the possibility to do quick quizzes on the Instagram story to test the readers' knowledge in a quick and fun way. The aim is to stimulate curiosity and start presenting the problem to the teenagers.

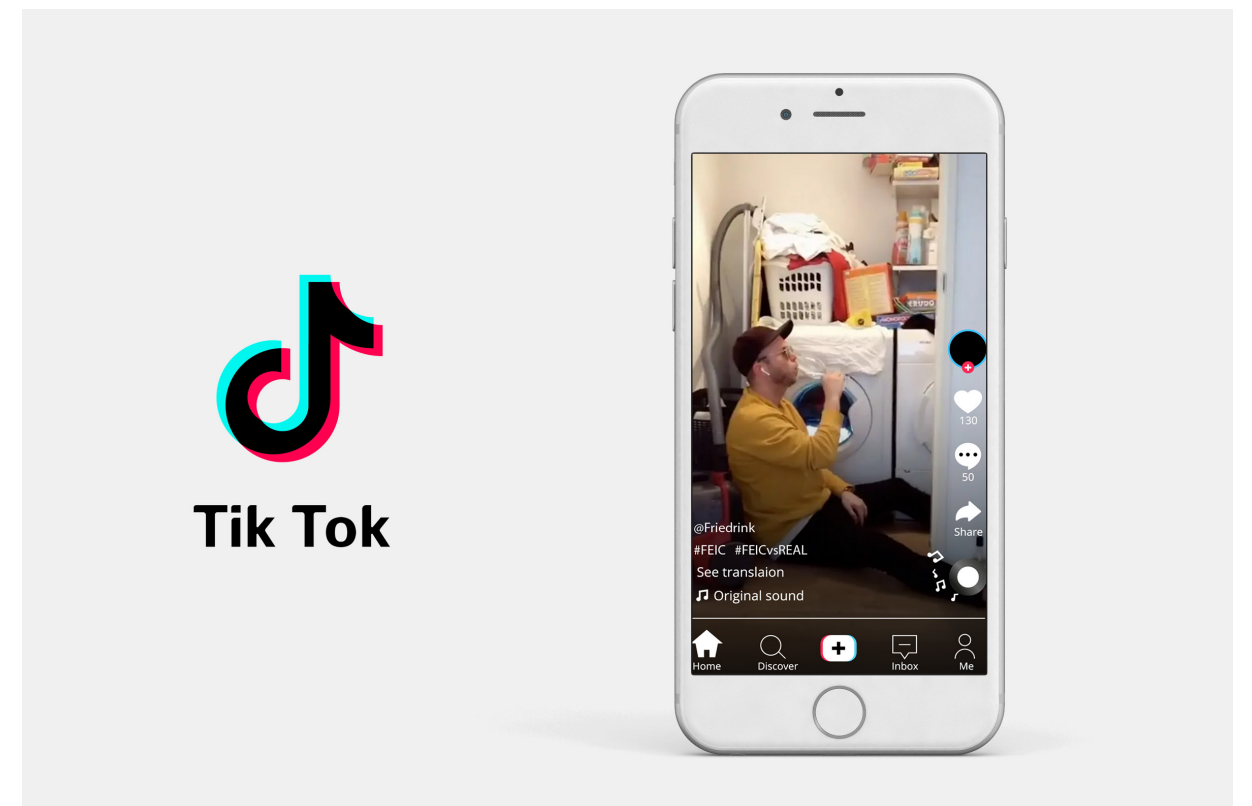
Grid post will also be used to inform teenagers on why they should do the activity. This time, instead of questions, the post will report a "how to" sentence (e.g. "How to understand your partner"). In this way, the effects of doing the activity are clear and relevant for teenagers.

Finally, in the Instagram profile, the posts done by teenagers as a closing moment of the activity will be reposted to show others examples and trigger curiosity.

Tik tok challenge: #FEIC vs Real

TikTok is a rather new social media (founded three years ago) based on 15-sec videos. The media allows users to create, edit, add audio and effect to their videos. The most popular feature is the voiceover: TikTok gives the possibility to take any audio file, and use it in a user video. Therefore, a broad audience is using the feature to create funny videos with audios from movies or popular songs. The fact that multiple users can use the same record to create different videos makes challenges a trendy concept. In challenges, different users are repeating the same action to show others their version. #FEIC vs Real is created to use these dynamics to create a fun and easy activity with a lower threshold compared to the ones offered by the platform. In #FEIC vs Real users need to act before a scene of a movie where there is a rejection, and after as they imagined the action would have happened in real life. This tool aims to point out in a fun way the difference between the media narratives and real life, making the teenagers aware of them.

38. TikTok Challenge



6.7 | Main Takeaways

Components synergy

The idea of fake and fakeness was selected as a theme for different reasons. It allows for funny dynamics, and it is a popular concept in today's society. Moreover, distinguishing fake and true easily, especially online, is a skill that characterizes generation z.

Fakeness as a theme

The components work in synergy to facilitate the wished behaviour. The social media aims to promote the platform by communicating the advantages of the service. The platform aims to provide the material for the activity and start to get the teenagers acquainted with the idea of fake narratives in the media. Finally, the activity focus on having an open conversation about rejection using the fake narratives of the media as a tool.

Evaluate

This chapter collects all insights and recommendation both from teenagers and experts about the service system #FEIC and its activity. First, it provides information about the methodologies followed to receive feedback. Then it presents a summary of the impression clustered by domain. And finally, the chapter provides recommendations for future developments based on the points of view from the interviewees.

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7.1 | Introduction

After defining the main elements, characteristics and features of the service, it was essential to evaluate with the target group and experts that followed the project. Following the SID methodology, the validation aimed to answer two questions:

Does the design evoke the wished behaviour “talk openly about rejection”?

What can be improved in order to better support the behaviour?

7.2 | Methodology

Two different activities were carried out to evaluate the various aspects of the final design: the interviews with experts and a small scale pilot with teenagers. Both activities focused on assessing the service and understanding how to improve it. More information is given in the following paragraphs.

Expert interviews

Five experts were consulted with the aims of incorporating in the feedback the different perspectives and expertise. The selected team was composed of two sociologists, one sexologist, one researcher and one social worker. To effectively receive feedback on different levels, semi-structured interviews were used using the same format for each expert. At the beginning, after a short presentation showcasing the service and the experience, questions about the idea of fakeness and the use of the media were asked. Then the focus moved on the activity and its modalities and in the end on the platform and social media.

The full list of questions is available in Appendix N.

Pilot test

The activity represents the core of the service and the primary tool used to achieve the desired behaviour defined in the design goal (see paragraph 4.1). Therefore, the pilot with the teenagers focused on defying the most appropriate interaction to trigger meaningful conversations about rejection. The test was structured as shown briefly in table 39, more details can be found in Appendix O.

39. Session timetable

Time	Activity	Goal
10min	Presentation	Provide teenagers with information about #FEIC and its features
60min	Test	Try out the modalities using one different Media card each round
30min	Discussion	Feedback on the modalities and on #FEIC in general

To be valuable, the interaction should promote “Talking openly about rejection”. In particular, some minimal indicators were defined to evaluate the activity more effectively. The activity should:

QUALITY

- Stimulate the conversation on a deeper level than usual chatting
- Leave a thought about how rejection is experienced in such a way and why

PARTICIPATION

- Create a secure space where teenagers feel free to express
- Invite all teenagers to participate in the discussion

In order to assess these parameters, three modalities were compared: What if, the Scale and the Confrontation. The procedures differentiated in the type of interaction, but they were all based on the Media card: a card reporting an image from a movie scene with a brief description.

In the **first one**, What if, first the Media card was read and the discussion started, then when the conversation was ending, a condition of the scene was changed by a “what if” question (e.g what if the protagonists have ten years more).

In the **second one**, the teenager had to grade the Media card from 1 to 5 based on the level of fakeness. After reading the card, the participants needed to decide together on a grade and then move on a second Media card.

In the **third one**, two Media cards were handed out, and teenagers needed to say which one for them was the fakest. In this modality, participants needed to compare the two cards and reflect on the differences and similarities.

7.3 | Results

All the feedback collected during the activity was clustered into four categories: fakeness, activity, platform and social media. In the fakeness part, the idea of “spot the fakeness” and use media as a tool is discussed, in the activity section the results from the pilot and experts’ comments are reported, and finally in the social media and platform section the feedback about the two components is detailed.

Fakeness & Media

Overall the expert feedback on the idea of fakeness in the media was well received. About the use of media, all experts agreed that it allows teenagers to speak about their point of view without necessarily speaking about their personal experiences. This dynamic can make teenagers more comfortable, and for example, some adolescents already use it in the community supervised by the social worker.

We had such a great conversation starting from the TV series. They come to you asking what you would do in the protagonist’s situation, but they seek advice for themselves. - Social worker

As a confirmation of this opinion, teenagers felt comfortable during the test. They shared personal stories to back up their views if they were willing to, but they did not feel urged in doing so. Moreover, teenagers thought they could say their opinion even if they never had an experience similar to the movie scene they were commenting on.

I liked that I can share stories with my friends, but I don’t have to. Sometimes I prefer to not say anything, but I can still participate - Participant

About the concept of fakeness, experts affirmed it was a valuable angle. It is young and well-fitting to attract the teenagers into having conversations that they wouldn’t usually have. However, they thought that the idea alone of fakeness was not enough to spark meaningful conversation, but it needed a stronger interaction during the activity. Moreover, the Fakeness angle can trigger curiosity in teenagers, but at the same time, it is crucial not to be too strict with the concept. The goal of the exercise should be to develop a critical sense about how rejection is portrayed in the media and deconstruct that image to understand how much it influenced our experience. Being too strict with the fakeness idea can move the focus away from the goal to irrelevant details such as the quality of movies or actors’ performance.

In conclusion, the use of media and the idea of fakeness are a great starting point for different reasons. However, it is important to use them as a tool to reach the goal and not as the final objective of the service.

Activity

The activity was the focus of the pilot test and an important section of the interview. First of all, the results of the three different modalities of the pilot study are compared in table 40.

40. Results table

	What if	Scale	Comparison
Quality	High Participants challenge other points of view with questions, trying to understand reasons behind	Moderate Participants express their opinion with details, but not in depth	Poor Participants state briefly their thought on which one is more fake
Participation	High All participants are involved and they actively elaborate on each other	Moderate All participants are involved and they actively elaborate on each other	

As it is possible to see, the What if activity triggered more conversation, more depth and encouraged the teenagers in participating more in the discussion. This preference was not only noted during the test, but also in the follow-up discussion the majority of participants (five on six) affirmed they preferred the first one.

These opinions are also shared with experts. In particular, the sociologist affirmed that even if it can be interesting to visualize on a scale where the scene is, the act of grading does not help to develop critical thinking. Moreover, the researcher pointed out how the What if cards always add a surprise element necessary to spice up the activity and keep the conversation exciting and new. Finally, the psychologist highlighted how the action of changing aspects from the scene could help in individualizing “double standards” such as the fact that males are prized for showing sexual desires, while females are punished. These ideas are particularly strong in teenagers’ culture and our society, and this tool could be a first way to uncover them.

It is more fun thinking of other situations rather than only commenting the scene - Participant

I liked to see how the opinion changed because we never talked about it - Participant

Another point that emerged in both evaluation activities is the lack of a conclusion moment. After the pilot test, there was a smooth transition into the follow-up discussion. However, in a normal setting, this wouldn't happen, leaving the activity without a closing moment. All experts agreed in the value of finding a closing moment, possibly with ritualistic elements in order to create a complete experience. It is important to highlight that since the activity would be without a moderator, any closing with an educational intent (e.g. thinking about the main takeaway of the discussion) will not work. Moreover, it will be considered too "school-like" by the teenagers as they confirmed in the discussion.

Finally, the evaluation focused on the practical side of the activity: the medium used and the occasion and place to play with it. Both the experts and teenagers agreed on the fact that a digital version of the cards would be easier to use and more practical. It requires less time for preparation, it merges more with what teenagers are used to utilizing, and it creates a less formal feeling. The teenagers even suggested creating an app to boost the game feelings. Moreover, the teenagers highlighted how the chosen place for the activity could influence the performance. Playing the activity in class, during an assembly or a lecture, and involving all students could assure more variety in opinions and

I think this will be great to play with the class, because you have people with extremely different opinions than yours. But I am not sure those people would be willing to participate in the discussion if forced - Participant

engage students that usually are not keen to have this conversation. On the other hand, forcing teenagers to participate could result in a lack of interest and participation.

Another point of the discussion was how many people could effectively participate in the activity as designed now. Taking the class assembly scenario mentioned before, could twenty students participate effectively in the discussion? Teenagers doubted the conversation could be clear and interesting while involving a large number of people. They agreed that it would be better to find different modalities or split up the class in smaller groups.

Finally, multiple experts highlighted how the activity could also be played with adults as parents or teachers. However, the participation requires the adults to be open-minded and willing to be "on the same level" as teenagers, leaving the educational approach behind. If the condition is met, the tool could be a useful

conversation starter to introduce the topic and sensitive topic as consent in the family context.

To conclude, the What if activity can work to trigger meaningful discussion around rejection. A digital version could be implemented, and attention should be drawn at the interaction with the tool when the teenagers are in a different context such as school, and a more significant number.

Social media and platform

Overall the synergy between platform and social media and their structure were well perceived both by experts and by teenagers.

About the structure, two notes arose by experts: the management and the target. In particular, the researcher and the sociologist pointed out the importance of having a clear management plan. For example, it is important to define who is going to edit the content of the platform and the Instagram profile and their tasks.

In addition to that, right now, the platform and social media are designed to target teenagers. However, it could be interesting to have a section also for educators or professionals working with teenagers and looking for stimuli and triggers to start a conversation about the topic.

Specifically, about the platform, only one note was made. In the current design, the most important sections are the Take action page to provide the material for the activity and the Explore page to showcase different examples of rejection in the media and start to get acquainted the teenager with this idea. However, the researcher felt that the two sections were disconnected since their aim primarily differed.

On the other hand, all experts agree on the main challenge for social media. Since social media is probably the first point of contact with the service, it is fundamental to have a clear and effective communication strategy. In particular, the fakeness angle can trigger curiosity, but it is not enough to have a compelling call to action. Experts affirmed a good option could be to highlight the advantages of having such conversations for the life of teenagers.

Some of these advantages could be:

- Be aware of your preferences to be free to choose
- Understanding better your partner or the gender you are attracted to
- Take the guidance of your narratives
- Leave a thought about how rejection is experienced in such a way and why

With the correct communication of those advantages to the teenagers, the media could engage more adolescents.

In conclusion, the platform and the activity are useful to achieve their goal, and they can work well together. It is important to have particular attention on how the advantages of playing the activity are communicated on social media and to work coherently with the platform to create consistency.

7.4 | Conclusions

Different conclusions can be drawn after analyzing all the insights collected. To organize them clearly, the two initial questions are answered.

Does the design evoke the wished behaviour “talk openly about rejection”?

The design is composed by the platform, the activity and the social media. All components seem to contribute to the desired behaviour. In particular, the What if activity succeeded in meeting the majority of parameters previously defined.

✓ Create a secure space where teenagers felt free to express

The use of media allows teenagers to express their opinion without feeling exposed or personally judged if others didn't agree with them.

✓ Stimulate the conversation on a deeper level than usual chatting

The “what if” questions make them reflect on a different level than usual. It allows them not only to express their opinion, but to confront how that changes with the mutation of parameters.

✓ Invite all teenagers to participate in the discussion

The design didn't openly invite teenagers to join in the debate. However, all participants were interested to express their opinion and elaborate on others.

✗ Leave a thought about how rejection is experienced in such a way and why

The teenagers defined the activity as interesting; however in the follow-up interviews they struggle to articulate their takeaway.

What can be improved in order to better support the behaviour?

Various improvements can be accomplished on the activity, platform, and social media based on the feedback received.

About the activity, a digital version is incorporated to lower the threshold in participating in the activity. Moreover, a conclusion moment is created using social media (Instagram) to boost the final reflection, but without having a “school-feeling”.

About the platform and the social media, the management role is clarified and handed over to a small group of volunteers. More-

over, in the platform the Explore page was revised to better connect with the activity. In particular, for each stimulus questions are added to the page as the “what if” question in the card. On the other hand, the focus of social media and in particular, the Instagram profile is shifted completely on promotion with attention on promoting the positive effects to do the What if activity.

Design requirements evaluation

As defined in paragraph 5.4, the design should: be appealing to the target, take into account group dynamics, be an online platform for offline gatherings, and be organized, but leaving freedom to the users. In the following paragraphs, each requirement is discussed in light of the evaluation result.

Take into account group dynamics

The activity was designed, keeping in mind the groups’ dynamic. Teenagers pick the two cards per turn, so each turn one teenager is in charge of the conversation. As a consequence, the power and responsibility is redistributed equally through the participant. During the pilot test, teenagers had a polite conversation, and they built upon each other. However, it was noted the participation was not even. Some teenagers were more active compared to the others, and they tend to moderate the debate even if they were not in charge. Moreover, in the pilot, the teenagers were observed continuously, and that could have influenced the dynamics.

Be an online platform for offline gatherings

This requirement is fully fulfilled. The platform and social media assure the online presence, while the activity is entirely offline. This characteristic was appreciated both from experts and teenagers that agreed on having better conversations offline.

Be appealing to the target

The design style is young and fresh, and the text descriptions are all designed to have the same language of the target and attract it. Moreover, the implementation of a social media section allows the service to be reachable where teenagers spend most of their leisure time. Moreover, after the pilot, the participants show interest in the deck of cards asking to keep it. The request can be interpreted as a demonstration of desirability.

Be organized, but leaving freedom to the users

While the platform and the social media are structured, the activity leaves more freedom to the users. The teenagers can decide: which cards want to use, where to play, with who and for how long without compromising the core of the activity.

7.5 | Future developments

Thanks to the feedback from experts and teenagers, #FEIC and especially the activity were revised. However, for effective implementation, further developments are needed. In the following scheme, it is possible to see a summary of the insights and how they were implemented in the final design. If the implementation was partial or not possible, a recommendation for the future was created. While in the next paragraphs, the recommendations are further explained divided by service components.

41. Implementation table

	Immediate conclusion	Future development
What if question trigger more and better conversation	Implemented in the activity	Develop more cards and possible new interactions
Missing a closing moment	Created a closure with an Instagram post	Test effectiveness
No suitable big gatherings		Develop and test interactions for larger groups
Only one activity doesn't suit a large audience		Develop and test activities based on various interactions
Need of a strong communication strategy	Social media aim is changed in promotion only	Ideate a social and advertisement campaign
Explore and Take action page are disconnected	Changed the Explore section to match activity	Ideate links in future activities

Activity

The activity as it is designed now, it is ready to be used. However, recommendations are made to enrich it and develop it further. First of all, right now a first draft of cards are designed (Appendix M), in the future the collection can be amplified. Moreover, the digital version of the cards could be developed into an independent app to facilitate the interactions and add gaming elements. Secondly, the closing of the activity with the Instagram post is constructed on the assumption that it will help teenagers in thinking again on the activity and will stimulate others that see the post in doing the activity. Those assumptions should be tested and the closing adjusted accordingly. Finally, the interaction could be studied to suit big gatherings such as a class assembly and facilitate a meaningful conversation in a big group. And to reach a larger audience, more interactions can be studied (e.g. act the situation first and then the one changed by the "what if" questions). The differentiation of interaction can accommodate different tastes.

Platform and social media

About the platform and social media, two main future developments are advised. First, right now, both components are in a prototype phase. The next step will be to develop the online platform and create social media accounts. Secondly, especially for social media, a communication campaign is needed. Experts gave guidelines on how to attract teenagers. However, it is recommended to consult with a Social Media Manager or Communication Strategist.

7.6 | Main Takeaways

What if question

Of the interactions and possibilities, the “what if” question triggered the most meaningful conversations. The idea of having two turns of conversations, and the opportunity to compare them led to an interesting discussion. The debate automatically focused not only on why a scene from a movie was fake or not, but why changing one element the opinions of some participants changed drastically.

Focus

Fakeness was judged as a good theme both from the experts and the teenagers. Both agreed it was interesting and left room for fun interactions. However, it is important to remember that fakeness is a theme, but not the main focus.

Communication

All experts agreed that communicating the project and the service correctly was a key element especially working with teenagers. Teenagers need to perceive the service as something cool, fun and useful.

Game dynamic

The What if cards spiced up the normal dynamics of commenting scenes from the media. However, in the pilot, the game was played for two turns. More tests should be done to verify the activity is still entertaining or if more elements should be added.

Closing moment

After the pilot, it was clear the necessity of a closing moment. The end could help the reflection further and create a ritualistic experience around the activity.

Conclude

Chapter eight provides a conclusion for the overall design process with the answer to the two research questions. The chapter reports the reflection on the design assignment, and the limitations and strengths of the project.

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8.1 | Introduction

After analysing the results from the final evaluation, it is important to look back and reflect on the project, the assignment and its execution. To clearly structure the discussion, three main sections are presented reporting different aspects of the reflection. First, the initial research questions are answered, then a reflection about the assignment, its strengths and limitations is reported. In the end, a personal reflection is written to highlight the personal learnings gained through the project.

8.2 | Research questions answer

In the beginning, two research questions were created to define the focus and guide the project. In the next paragraphs, the questions are answered.

How do Italian teenagers and their support system manage rejection?

According to the literature review and experts interviews described in chapter 2, teenagers don't have the knowledge and skill to put in place a healthy coping mechanism for rejection consciously. The consequences could vary from psychological damage (low self-esteem, low self-love, anxiety and stress) to abuse behaviours (controlling and manipulating patterns, insulting, blackmailing). The lack could derive from the absence of sentimental and sexual education in Italian schools and the lack of preparation of educators to address this topic. As pointed out in the context model (paragraph 3.3), all these elements contribute in creating a taboo around rejection, making it hard for educators and teenagers to talk about it and as a consequence reflect and grow.

What could help Italian teenagers and their support system in managing healthier rejection?

Breaking the taboo around rejection could help teenagers in shifting mentality and accepting rejection as an opportunity to grow and self-exploration instead of a personal failure. It is important to note that the shift in mindset doesn't involve an erasure of pain or sadness that could arise when experiencing a rejection. The change is in how these emotions are lived and experienced, not in the emotions itself. To reach this goal, it is necessary to start talking about rejection and why in society is experienced in such a negative way. Conversating is the first step of a long journey that will lead to societal change and a different narrative around rejection.

8.2 | Project reflection

The project aimed to create a support to deal with rejection healthily for Italian teenagers that are discovering intimate relationships. It wished to achieve it by triggering meaningful conversations among teenagers about rejection.

The outcome of the design process resulted in a service that invites teenagers to organize small gatherings where they can discuss how the images of rejection portrayed in the media are influencing them and their belief. According to the teenagers, the experience is fun, stimulating and interesting to do.

When reflecting on the different phases of the project, various points can be made.

The research part was one of the richest concerning participation and a variety of methodologies. Different perspectives were considered by interviewing sociologists, sexologists, researchers, peer educators, a social worker, teenagers and parents. Their involvement assured plurality and richness of insights that create a solid base for the analysis phase. However, due to the variety and richness of the methods, the analysis phase was also more complicated than expected. The identification of context factors following the SID methodology helped greatly in structuring the information. Despite the benefit, the elements were not used directly to create a context model, and their correlations could have been studied more to generate more knowledge.

Then, the challenge was to create a comprehensive model to describe how rejection was experienced from different perspectives. It needed to be inspiring to leave room for creativity, but at the same time specific to be insightful. After different iterations, the context model was created, and the community perspective was chosen (paragraph 3.5). The model was a great tool to communicate the overview of the situation briefly. However, it didn't give specific intervention points, instead of intervention areas. The lack of guidelines implicated a broader exploration in the developing phase, but also more room for creativity.

After the final iteration, the outcome shifted more towards the interpersonal level concerning the modalities and the effects on the target. The service is based on facilitating conversations, rather creating a community committed to doing so. During the development of the design, it was noted that the threshold for

creating a community was too high for teenagers. Moreover, the procedure to involve an existing community, such as school, was not feasible due to the time constraint. Possibly the change could have been avoided by defining more specific intervention points during the analysis phase. However, the design still supports the wished behaviour “talk openly about rejection” and contributes positively to the context model.

Generally, it is possible to affirm that from the research to the evaluation a good array of methodologies was used. The combination of different procedures allows to keep into account different angles and to analyze the problem and the solution from different perspectives. Due to the pandemic, some methods were adapted for online or contactless interactions. The adaptation may have caused weaker results, but it also gave the possibility to have constant contact with the target group through online platforms such as Zoom or Whatsapp.

Moreover, choosing Italy as the context was a strength of the project. First, it allows the designer to work in a familiar environment facilitating the understanding of it. Secondly, all interviews and activities involving participants were held in Italian. The use of Italian made understandable all nuances and reduced miscommunication.

On the other hand, since the project was self-initiated, all participants were recruited through a personal network. The sample included only fifteen teenagers, mostly girls, that volunteered to participate in the study. This may have influenced the outcome. Therefore, the results should not be generalized to all the target.

42. Strengths & limitations

Strengths	Limitations
Plurality of perspectives	Analysis
Array of methods	Online adaptations
Italian context	Homogeneous sample

In conclusion, the project had strengths as the **plurality of perspectives**, the variety of methods used and the previous knowledge of the Italian context. However, there are some limitations: the difficulty in the analysis, the adaptation due to the pandemic and the homogeneous target sample. In the figure 42, a summary of the main strengths and limitations is reported.

8.3 | Personal reflection

The graduation project represented one of the biggest and most interesting challenges of my master. I am happy and proud of how I tackled it, even with the difficult conditions that the pandemic forced on us.

When I started my master, I had a completely different idea of what my skills and my passions were. During my studies, I could explore and understand my passion for User research. I feel this project is a good representation of this journey and a confirmation of my keen interest in understanding human behaviour and how to influence it.

Moreover, the project gave me the possibility to improve as a designer and as a person. I had the possibility to manage a project by myself from the beginning to the end. The experience was challenging, but I am deeply satisfied with my time-management skills. Also, my relational skills have significantly improved throughout the project. In the beginning, I felt stressed by only sending out one email to ask for advice. At the end of the project, I can say that I succeed to include various experts and teenagers making this diversity one of the strengths of the project.

Another personal and professional achievement was to understand when to stop doing an activity and start reflecting and analyzing the results. I tend to dare myself with ambitious challenges. This tendency is positive when it allows me to go out of my comfort zone, explore and grow. However, sometimes I do it for the only purpose of demonstrating myself I can do whatever I desire. In my graduation, I learned not only how to recognize this pattern, but also that stopping and reflecting is as much necessary as doing. This awareness will benefit me and my future projects.

Another aspect that I learned is never to be afraid to ask for help. Even if I felt I made huge progress in this matter during the project with the constant involvement of experts or the target group, I think I have, as always, room for improvement. Designing for societal change is my professional ambition, and I was happy to try out a new methodology. However, I feel I could have explored it more in-depth if I had asked for more advice about it.

A chapter of my life is closing, and I am happy to bring with me so many valuable learnings. I am looking forward to continuing my career and hopefully continue to work on the project.



Acknowledgements

I am beyond grateful for all the support that I received during my graduation project and during my master. Therefore I will take this space to thank all the people that made this experience so rich and empowering.

To my graduation team

First of all, I would like to thank my graduation team. Thank you Marieke and Nynke for our discussion and your precious feedback. The fact that two people that I appreciate professionally and personally committed to the project gave me energy to do my best. Thank you Marieke for believing in me since my first year at the TU Delft. I loved all our meetings, and I always felt enriched by them.

Thank you Nynke for dedicating your time and energy even when they were limited due to the pandemic.

To the experts and teenagers

You helped me in making a small idea into my graduation project. Thank you for not only believing in the project, but also committing time and energy even in time of a health crisis. Your enthusiasm and inputs motivated me and helped shape the project.

Thanks to all the experts and in particular to Vittoria Bottelli, Andrea Rampini, Sveva Magaraglia and Giulia Selmi for sharing your knowledge and opinion with me.

Thanks to all teenagers that participated in the project. In particular thanks to Stella Fachin, your input was incredibly precious and knowing you were enthusiastic as me about the idea, gave me great confidence.

To my parents | italian

Ogni parola spesa mi sembra scontata e banale, ma ci proverò lo stesso. Grazie per avermi accompagnato anche in questo percorso, come sempre, con infinito amore e attenzione. Grazie non solo per aver sostenuto con tutti i vostri mezzi questo mio progetto, ma soprattutto per ascoltarmi, farmi sentire quanto la mia presenza sia apprezzata e valorizzata e avermi sempre circondata di puro amore

To my brother

I will never forget the conversation we had six years ago when I was a scared teenager. I was so afraid of the uncertainty that I decided to choose what I thought could be a secure career as a biotechnologist. You saw that, and you sat with me making me realize how insane it was to give up on my design dream without even trying. Thank you for that, and for being the bravest person I know. For asking me uncomfortable questions and making me reflect and grow. I love you very much, and you would have been my favourite brother even if I had more than one.

To my boyfriend

It will always amaze me how you can be at the same time a safe port to dock when outside the storm is hitting hard and the wind that continually pushes me outside my comfort zone. I am happy and proud I shared this adventure and my last five years with you. Thank you for the unlimited support, for your smart comments, for our night chat and your patience and understanding when I couldn't spend any time together. I am not sure what my life will look like after my graduation, but I take great comfort from the idea you will be there to figure it out with me.

To the women of my life

I firmly believe that in a society that wants us to be against each other, having a group of incredible women around me is one of the most significant gifts I have. I would not be the person I am today without you. So here is my thank you for each one of you (in a sort of alphabetical order).

First, to the only one that will not read this. Thank you grandma. You were a relief to my soul. I will always bring your love and sweetness with me and treasure all the time that I was lucky enough to spend with you.

To my incredible mum, to her irrepressible fierceness, for showing me that it is always worth to stand up for yourself and your loved ones.

To Chiara, and her enormous heart. Thank you for always holding my hand when it was shaking and listening to me even when my words had no sense. Sharing so much of this journey with you was one of my favourite things about it.

To Greta and her courage. I had the honour to grow up with you and seeing you flourish makes me the proudest friend. Thank you for being an example of loyalty and persistence and for all the unconditional love and support.

To Giada, an endless source of inspiration and support. Without you I wouldn't dream to do my master abroad and learn English in my twenties. Thank you for showing me my worth and believing in me since day one.

To Veronica, to her disarming kindness. Thank you for always having tender words for me and making me feel I could always count on you.

To Hosana, her bright mind and exceptional sweetness. Thank you for always being there to advise me and think aside. This journey couldn't be the same without your loving support.

To Tina and her uncontrollable joy. Thank you for thousands of smiles and hugs when most needed. Even when a pandemic was happening, I felt seen and loved.

To Martina, for being my corner of home in a foreign country. Thank you for all your advice, your sweetness and our night at De Gist.

To Micol, thank you for always making me comfortable to speak with you, I loved all our conversations. I was incredibly happy to share two months together.

Thank you.

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