



Specific Features of Social Groups of Teenagers with Deviant Orientation

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ABSTRACT

The theoretical analysis of the category “social group” has been presented in the article from the position of sociological and general psychological approaches. The conclusion has been drawn that a social group – is the system of activity that serves, firstly, as the social environment acting on a person and, secondly, he himself experiences other individuals’ influence. Because of this, group influences serve as a mediating system between a person and society. Social groups of teenagers with deviant orientation have been identified. The analysis of content characteristics of such groups has been given, their significance for each member of the group and teenagers’ orientation to interaction within this group. The conclusion was made that firstly, teenagers who are prone to deviant behavior, possess personal and individual specific features which determine the manifestation of deviations in their behavior and getting into groups of teenagers with similar specific features. Secondly, groups satisfy the needs of teenagers who are prone to deviant behavior, in communication, in spending their free time, self-assertion. Further, due to elevated conformity, teenage groups with deviant orientation become more rigidly structured and closed for other people, which leads to teenagers’ withdrawal who are prone to deviant behavior, in the framework of the anti-social environment. And finally, staying in the deviant milieu leads to the teenager’s personality deformation which is expressed in a greater rupture of interpersonal ties with the positive milieu, as well as the person’s orientation development to deviant behavior. This article can be of use to teachers of educational institutions and practical psychologists.

Keywords: social group, teenager’s personality, deviant behavior, deviant orientations.

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INTRODUCTION

In scientific studies a social group is considered from different points of view. Firstly, this can be a casual group of people, i.e. such community where individuals do not interact with one another other than within this group, and after the cause or ground due to which the whole group assembled loses its glamour, the participants of such community stop their relationships. Secondly, social groups can get unified on the basis of some general signs not connected with their direct contacts: for instance, in the level of income, level of education and etc. We can say about this type of the group that it excludes the fact of interacting, «people become its members by themselves, without live relationships between them, without contact or even territorial proximity» [1].

Such a variety of approaches to the definition of a social group is connected with the difference in disciplinary approaches to this phenomenon. For instance, the sociological aspect is characterized by the search for an objective criterion of distinguishing groups, identifying real social groups according to social criteria, например, for example, the identification of socially positive and asocial groups on the basis of the existing norms in society. The analysis of the psychological processes' specifics in a social group is characteristic of a general psychological point of view. However, a view of a social group as the interrelated system of individuals who have real direct contacts and who are unified on the basis of interpersonal interaction is missing in the framework of the above-mentioned approaches. That is why the task of unifying sociological and general psychological approaches arises, as a result of which, the focus of the social groups' analysis would be directed to content characteristics [2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8].

This task is solved within social psychology. According to G.M. Andreyeva's [9] point of view, social psychology, first of all, studies not conditional but real groups «as a really existing group in which people get together, unified by some general sign, a type of joint activity or are in the same identical conditions, circumstances, they are aware in a certain way of their affiliation to this group».

American scientists R. Baron [10] are of the similar opinion, they deduce the definition of a group with respect to the following requirements:

- 1) to become a part of a group, people must directly or indirectly interact one with another;
- 2) they must be interdependent to a certain extent;
- 3) the relations of group members must be relatively stable, exist for a considerable period of time;
- 4) people must share some common goals, to which they are striving for;
- 5) their interacting must be structured in a certain way;
- 6) people must be aware of the fact that they are a part of the group [10].

An integrated approach to understanding social groups is offered by Yu.A. Kleiberg [11], a domestic social psychology researcher of deviant behavior: a social group is considered as the environment of an individual's activity and behavior. The social environment «characterizes relations, interrelationships, ties, a way of life, individuals' culture, their mentality, manifested in certain life space, microenvironment and characterizes the local subculture, the nearest social milieu, a group» [12, 13].

Thus social and psychological approach unifies, integrates the two above-mentioned approaches (sociological and general psychological) analyzing content-related characteristics of social groups, revealing the specific features of influence on a person of a certain group. At the same time, the social group is considered as the system of activity and serves, firstly, as the social milieu acting on a person and, secondly, he experiences individuals' influences. That is why in social psychology group influences serve as the mediating system between a person and society [14, 15, 16, 17, 18].

METHODOLOGICAL BASES AND METHODS

Based on this position, a task arises before us to identify real social groups of teenagers with a deviant orientation, to this end we need to analyze the sociological bases of such groups' identification. On the basis of the identification of real groups of deviant teenagers the analysis of content characteristics of such groups is possible, their significance for each individual member of the group and teenagers' orientation to the interrelationship within this group. Further, considering the deviance-oriented groups of teenagers characteristic features peculiar to them as subjects of activity will be analyzed (group needs, norms, values, mindsets).

In sociological studies, first of all, groups are identified in a *social orientation*. On this criterion social groups are viewed as social and anti-social ones – if the reaction from the social milieu is a regulator of the group's behavior then, such group will be socially-oriented, if unlawful ideas, mindsets and norms prevail in the group, then in this case its anti-social orientation will be observed. In the same way, I.S. Polonsky [19] proposes his typology in view of the nature of a social orientation who divides non-formal youth groups into three types: pro-social or socially positive; asocial, standing aside from social problems, incorporated in the system of small group values; anti-social.

Considering the youth subculture as an objective-conditioned part of social reality, a number of researchers made an attempt to classify it. A.V. Tolstykh [20] classified youth subcultures according to activity directions, having distinguished the following groups: social and political, promulgating certain social and political views and radical, rejecting commonly accepted rules and norms, and striving for a total change of the existing order. A. Bashlachev [21] proposes the systematization on a degree of conformity, identifying conform, conditionally-conform and non-conform (protest) youth subcultures.

Observing entirely deviation-oriented teen groups, A.L. Salagayev [22] in his study distinguishes delinquent groups and traditional neighborhood groups of teenagers (yard companies) on the basis of functional characteristics. A sign of a yard company is the

orientation to joint leisure, whereas functional manifestations of a problem youth group is delinquency and violent actions.

Thus teen groups of an antisocial orientation are identified in sociological studies, their main peculiarity is the orientation to the violation of social norms and prevalence of mindsets for anti-normative actions. Anti-social groups take various forms, for example: radicals, promulgating anti-social political views, non-conform teen subcultures of muggers, delinquent groups of teenagers that team up for the purpose of committing a violent act and illegal activity. Various forms of deviant teen groups, of course, allow us to directly observe social groups exactly, that are in the sphere of our analysis, however, the essence of members' real interaction of considered groups as the social and psychological system is lost. For this purpose the analysis of psychological characteristics of deviation-oriented teen group members is required, why the unification of individuals take place and how they really interact within the named groups [23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29].

The problem of teenage groups with deviant behavior is considered by many domestic psychologists who study very different psychological characteristics of teenagers. I.S. Kon [30] points out that teenage groups, first of all, satisfy the need for free communication not constrained by adults. An affiliation to a company raises a teenager's confidence in himself and gives additional opportunities of self-assertion.

T.D. Martsinkovskaya [31] also points out that teenagers' communication with peers is the leading activity in this age. At the same time not only contacts are important to a teenager but also the recognition of peers. The frustrated need to be significant in his referent group can cause serious deviations in socialization and personal growth. The orientation to the norms of a group and aspiration to comply with them raise conformity. That is why it is required to take into account the level of development, value orientations of that group which a teenager is a member of, to understand what a teenager can give it and what a group can give him. The analysis of values and activity content of non-formal, spontaneously emerging teen groups is especially important in this respect. Spending a greater part of time in these groups, deriving the most valuable information from their communication in such groups, following the patterns teenagers form the orientation of their behavior which can be both pro-social and anti-social, deviant.

G.I. Zabryansky [32] expresses the same opinion. In adolescence the community of peers performs extremely important functions: it provides an emotional comfort, it is the basis of interpersonal relations, it is an information channel. Juvenile delinquents usually come into contacts with people having the same problems, difficulties, the same, almost unlimited amount of free time. As far as misunderstanding and conflicts deepen in other spheres of life activity, the subjective importance of such communication increases.

An extensive and detailed analysis of social groups of teenagers with a deviant orientation was made by T.D. Vladimirova [33] who revealed the following aspects of teenagers' behavior in deviant groups. First of all, the teenage period requires romanticism and heroism and it also requires moral rules which he could, focus on, which he could perform and rebel against. Various extremist and fascist groups, sects and criminals act actively and purposefully in this background. All of them offer what teenagers seek: some

idea which seems to be superior for him, intragroup moral which assumes the functions of a moral law, an organization the affiliation to which at this age satisfies a basic need for protection much higher than any other casual group, a possibility inside the group to realize the need for intimate personal communication and aspiration for continuous emotional contacts, a possibility for self-fulfillment and self-assertion by means of performing significant actions for the group, the presence of a rigid hierarchy allowing a group member to feel protected and free from responsibility for himself and his deeds [34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40).

RESULTS

So, on the basis of the conducted analysis we can draw a conclusion that one of the basic needs of the teenage period is to strive for grouping with peers for communication and joint activity. While satisfying it, teenagers join together in non-formal groups, the affiliation to which is practically a compulsory element of the socialization process at this age. Being a member of this or that group, a teenager has a possibility to master interpersonal communication models, «to try on» various social roles.

The so-called emancipation reaction is typical of the teenage period. Briefly this phenomenon can be characterized as a powerful aspiration for self-dependence, growing apart from the family and adults, getting rid of their care. The street gives similar freedom or its illusion. Peers, friends, fellows are always in the foreground among reference significant people, but parents often take the last place even after teachers. This age tendency grows into a serious problem for those children who do not have normal family relationships and caring parents [41].

That is why practically all unsupervised children and teenagers fall into asocial groups. This is connected, first of all, with the fact that the non-formal communication environment is often the only socialization sphere for a teenager of the «risk group». Not infrequently, having complicated interrelations in the family, not attending an educational or another leisure activity institution, a teenager is forced to join this or that group automatically accepting the system of its norms and values which does not always turn out to be socially positive [42].

Value orientations and moral principles propagated by the reference group are personally significant for a great number of deviant teenagers, and norms of behavior accepted in it are more attractive than those which have been established in the family and at school [43].

These conclusions have been confirmed by I.P. Bashkatov's [44] researches who believes that non-formal groups of teenagers are a peculiar social organism with specific laws of emergence, development and functioning. They have their own norms, values, interests, some group motives and needs.

Studying a teenager's personality from the delinquent environment A.Yu. Golodnyak [45]) discovers that according to the manifestation extent of their inclination to delinquent

behavior, certain changes take place in specific features of their personality in the parameter "social relations". Beginning from adequate relations in general with peers and teachers, and various relations with parents they go towards the prevalence of conflict relations practically with all adults and isolation of interpersonal relations in a delinquent group of peers in combination with a high conformity in accepting group norms.

Low self-respect is statistically associated among teenagers with all types of deviant behavior – dishonesty, affiliation to criminal groups, committing offences, drug abuse, drunkenness, aggressive behavior, suicidal behavior.

DISCUSSION

Thus on the basis of the analysis made and conclusions obtained we can identify the following psychological peculiarities of teenagers determining their participation in deviant character groups. The most important cause of teenagers' drawing to the deviant milieu is that a teen group satisfies the need for communication, for spending their spare time. A teenager's affiliation to a group of peers gives additional opportunities of self-assertion. Some of such groups grow into anti-social. The teenage period also requires moral rules which a teenager could align himself with. In this background some groups offer anti-social morals of different kinds which a teenager easily accepts.

One of the basic needs of the teenage period is an aspiration to join a group with peers for communication and joint activity. Satisfying it, teenagers get together in non-formal groups mastering these or other models of a deviant character. Besides, the emancipation reaction is typical of the teenage period, i.e. the aspiration for growing apart from the family and adults, for getting rid of their care. Friends, peers turn out to be in the foreground. In case of unfavorable family relations such tendency turns into a problem of developing a deviant way of life.

A fundamental need for respect, accepting and love is blocked in a majority of problem children and teenagers, but in street groups this need can be satisfied. It is psychological comfort of staying in a non-formal group that explains why it is so difficult to get a child back into the organized environment.

Besides, among the causes contributing to the teenagers' participation in non-formal groups, first of all, it is necessary to note the ill-being in family relations, a bad organization of leisure activities, disappointment in adults' ideals, social injustice. The causes of teenagers' participation in non-formal youth groups also lie in poor academic progress and alienation from classmates, a need for an emotional relaxation, an insufficiency of attention to teenagers in families, in child neglect arousing the feeling of loneliness and defenselessness.

In its turn, social groups represent the systems of interrelationships and interactions of their members and in this sense serve as a separate subject that has its distinctive features. That is why apart from psychological peculiarities of teenagers contributing to their joining the groups of a deviant orientation, it is necessary to consider characteristic features of social teenage groups with a deviant orientation as a subject of activity.

In this connection, first of all, it is required to point out I.V. Sevastyanova's [46] view who asserts in her study that social relations are possible not only in a person's behavior but also in group members' behavior. Deviating behavior is a form of disorganizing an individual's behavior in a group of people (deviant people and delinquents) which exposes nonconformity with established expectations, moral and legal demands of society. One should speak of deviating behavior of a person not at the time when he starts committing an offence, but when a teenager spends his free time in the groups of a negative orientation.

In contradiction to «external» perceptions, there is a rigid system of rules which regulate and standardize everything that takes place in deviant groups of teenagers. The similar study was conducted by S.A. Belicheva [47], a Russian scientists, in the course of which a hypothesis was confirmed that the dissatisfaction of his position in a class serves as a major cause of the teenager's social ties deformation and emergence of non-formal criminal teen groups. Problem teenagers owing to their isolation, lack of recognition in a school group extremely treasure the opinion of their street friends. Self-assertion flows in them in forms of anti-social behavior in conformity with norms and moral values of criminal groups. An isolated person starts actively seeking the environment where he could feel «a normal person». A non-formal group, a yard company becomes such environment where the prestigious dissatisfaction of «problem» children is compensated.

In the situation of group excitement, an elevated conformity is supplemented with the second factor – psychological contagion. Emotional excitement of the surrounding people increases the impulse multi-fold that comes from the words of the leader, music, rhythm and etc. All this, taken together, weakens a conscious self-control and awareness of the personal responsibility, generates the feeling of anonymity and impunity as a result of which emotional excitement can be manifested in the most unexpected and unpredictable way, aggressiveness in particular. This can explain various kinds of offences, crimes and other misdemeanors of teenagers committed by the group. In opinion of teenagers themselves the feeling of «gregariousness» reduces the responsibility for their behavior to some extent, gives strength and confidence in themselves.

That is why when their own points of view, evaluations differ from the position of the group, teenagers prefer solidarity with it. It has been found that criminal groups of peers are not only the bases of forming anti-society views and mindsets, of mutual «enrichment» with negative habits and skills, they do not only serve as a psychological support for self-justification while committing offences («like everyone»), but directly involve in anti-society behavior [48].

Thus taking into account the fact that the criminal underworld rules strictly act in deviant groups and criminal subculture is the expression of moral and social laws of this world, teenagers are forced to choose drugs, crimes and other forms of a criminal way of life. A. Dobrovich [49] described «unwritten rules» of deviant groups. They practically conform to the norms of criminal subculture in full, whose main characteristics as V.F. Pirozhkov [50] believes, are the presence of the criminal hierarchy and anti-social rules that perform the role of a law. Another specific feature of deviance-oriented teen groups is their closedness for

adults. As a result any attempts of communication teenagers meet with hostility and the opinion of the adult majority is not authoritative for them.

In its turn, S.A. Belicheva [51] points out that the factual loss by the teenager of the internal link with a positively-oriented group, being formed on the basis of socially significant activity, exerts a decisive influence on the formation of his personality deforming it in the direction of the orientation to deviant behavior.

This peculiarity of mutual influence of personal specific features and group characteristics in the deviant behavior development is disclosed in the study of the teenagers' similarity – participants of criminal groups [52]. The analysis of social and psychological peculiarities of deviance-oriented teen groups helped to identify specific features which contribute to an excessive similarity with the group and prevent from segregating, which in its turn, is told upon the formation of similarity. Closedness leading to a rigid hierarchical structure belongs to such features which tells upon the structure of interpersonal relations [53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60].

CONCLUSION

A very important methodological principle is deduced on the basis of the above-mentioned peculiarities analysis of social teen groups with a deviant orientation. Firstly, teenagers who are prone to deviant behavior possess personal and individual peculiarities which determine the manifestation of deviations in their behavior and grouping of teenagers with the similar features. Secondly, groups satisfy the needs of teenagers prone to deviant behavior, for communication, spending free time, self-assertion. Further, due to elevated conformity the teen group with a deviant orientation become more structured and closed for the people around which leads to teenagers' unsociability who are prone to deviant behavior within the antisocial milieu. And finally, staying in the deviant milieu leads to a teenager's personality deformation which is manifested in a greater rupture of interpersonal ties with the positive environment as well as the development of the personality's orientation to deviant behavior. That is why the study of teenagers prone to deviant behavior from positions of the social and psychological approach should be conducted in two dimensions: on the one hand, the study of personal peculiarities of teenagers prone to deviant behavior orientating to the personality development to manifest deviations in behavior; on the other hand, the study of group, social and psychological peculiarities of teenagers prone to deviant behavior that lead to the formation of the social environment of a deviant character. Such approach that corresponds to the social and psychological one which studies mutual influence of a person and environment is proposed to make use of in our work as the study of value orientations and social mindsets of teenagers prone to deviant behavior and the study of teenagers' value orientations and social mindsets who are in the social milieu that predisposes to deviant behavior [61].

The materials of this article can be of use to psychologists-practitioners, teachers of educational institutions as well as social workers and staff members of special secure institutions and secure training centers.

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