The Group of Friends as Factor of
Socialization and Juvenile Delinquency

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Abstract: The theme of the paper is "The group of friends as factor of socialization and juvenile delinquency". I have chosen this theme due to the proportion of this phenomenon in our country. The purpose of the paper is to highlight the causes and the factors for juvenile delinquency because I believe that the "failure" in the juvenile delinquency issue is because we concentrate too much on the consequences and too little on the causes and roots of this phenomenon. I have described the group as being the development and formation environment for the youth's personality but also as being the origin of the young "delinquents, especially those groups called "street groups" or "gangs". The group, right after the family, has a positive effect over the individual and his personality. I have concluded, by mentioning some "failure" in elementary socialization, other mechanisms of continuous socialization.

Keywords: group; delinquency; teenagers; socialization; behavior

The approach of the juvenile delinquency phenomenon, of its production mechanisms, justifies its correctness and relevance through the more or less intense character of this phenomenon. Criminal illicit, which seriously undermines the human interests, of maximum generality, jeopardizes the fundamental values and norms recognized and accepted within a given society, thus affecting its proper functioning.

In the literature, it has become more and more important that the group of friends play an important role in the evolution of the adolescent. The adolescent's participation in an age group is one of the most important experiences of his life

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that contributes to the formation of the future adult. The experience gained by the teenager in the groups he/she participates in is varied (family, school, sporting, scientific, etc.) leading to a secondary socialization with positive effects on the personality of the young person, developing certain features and characteristics such as: honor, friendship, responsibility, etc.

The group of friends or entourage represents a socio-human environment consisting of the persons with whom the child (adolescent) is in close, frequent relationships and who influence him/her in the formation of desires, interests, ideals and school or professional options.

Due to some limitations, the teenager feels the need to participate in a group other than the formal one, which fully meets his needs, presenting other peculiarities. Within the group, however, not all adolescents behave the same way. Thus, in some teenagers, under the influence of individual aggression, a sense of guilt is created that generates frustration. Within the group they feel unloaded from this burden. Others discover in the group "the means of power and domination", which makes them take quickly responsibility for others, the group becoming a shelter and support. Group formation appears as a complex process, as a very varied causality, such as the development of interests; *finding security; developing a new identity; the need to escape from the formal environment (especially the family); the need to seek the role to which the new Statute entitles them; means of affirmation of the Ego.*

Adolescents establish a series of relationships through which they integrate into certain reference groups (playgroup, friends, youth associations, etc.) because they share the same ideals, concern them with the same issues, have similar interests and needs. Because these needs cannot be met within the family or school, adolescents retreat into their group of friends. The period of adolescence is specific to the formation of a group of friends, the establishment of stable, long-lasting relationships. In the reference group the adolescent finds his identity, this group allows him to affirm himself. Most reference groups have a beneficial influence on the individual, on his personality structure.

However, there are also groups whose influence is due to negative socialization of adolescents. These are the "street" or "gangs" groups of recidivists or with a criminal record, which attract many adolescents in their entourage whose moral education is not enough rigorous and manifesting predispositions or even behavioral disorders. These groups are able to attract some teenagers into various

deviant and degrading acts and deeds with a high degree of social dangers such as theft, trafficking in substances, robberies, rape, etc. (Berkovity, 1993)

The group of friends provides the teenager with the security, the recognized position, the safety of solving some problems. Within the group, adolescents are taught how to avoid parent or teacher constraints or adult manipulation techniques. When adolescents lack parental orientation and affection, the influence of the group (entourage) becomes very strong. The group gets to identify with a family characterized by informal relations that, due to the development of multiple sporting, cultural activities, increase the adolescent creativity, but it can also direct the conduct to areas of social exclusion. The group of friends captures the attention, interest, sociability of the teenager, enables them to capitalize on their qualities, thus contributing to the development of the self-concept. The self-evaluation is outlined through others' assessments. The teenager strives to create a good impression in the group, so he tries to follow the rules, create interesting occupations to hold convincing talks. These friendships can last all their life, can definitely mark the personality of the teenager.

The formal group meets the needs of security and social recognition. The influence of the group of friends has a number of positive effects on the individual:

-   satisfies fundamental emotional needs: understanding, support, model identification, recognition, communication, membership of a community or group;

-   ensures the possibility of learning, solidarity, cooperation, hierarchy, a system of values, the assimilation of norms of cohabitation, sexual roles;

-    facilitates self-knowledge, intercognition, empathy, friendship formation, assuming tasks and obligations.

Adrian Neculau (1986), states that: "*The group provides the teenager with an ideal of self, a reassuring image of his own self, an antidote for his earlier anxieties ... Weak - the teenager seeks the power of the group, seeks to identify with it; insignificant - seeks opportunities to affirm, capitalize; unknown - wants to become necessary; threatened - waiting for protection from others*". Socialization within the group differs from family socialization, where the role of transmitter of rules, values, and models lies with the adult. The street group has a particular influence in the socialization of the minor, who sees in the group "a soul community" that gives him/her identity, hierarchical positions and problem solving. James Coleman (1960) (Cohen, 1986) definitively developed, as a continuation of other schools,

the notion of subculture or adolescent society, a notion that adolescence implies a set of rules and specific values that characterize a particular lifestyle of children or young people, differently of adults, and providing support, guidance, security, recognition and group rating criteria.

Unlike the adult assessment criteria, those of the adolescent group focus on personal autonomy, identification with heroic patterns, and confrontation with the adult world. Adolescent socialization through the entourage existing in and out of school has a more important role than socialization within the family, because in contemporary societies, the youth schooling period has increased as opposed to traditional societies.

Thus, the notion of adolescent subculture can explain how the delinquent subcultures take form and also the appeal of neighborhood bands to adolescents, because they influence each other during the socialization process within the group.

Numerous psychological and sociological theories refer to group delinquency: the theory of delinquent subcultures (Cohen), the theory of differential association (Sutherland), and the theory of the reference group (Clark) show that most of the delinquent acts are committed in the group as a result of exercise mutual influences between members.

The central concept in these groups, as in any human group, is that of uniformity. Within groups, there are pressures on uniformity. The greater the cohesion of the group, the greater is the pressure on uniformity. This is especially true for those who do not adhere to the values that are normal to that group, having different opinions from the other members of the group. Researches in the psychosocial field have shown that an individual objectively right, and being aware of this, reaches the opinion of the group, who was unanimously wrong. This is a compliance effect borne by the individual in a state of divergence from the group's reasoning, subject to group pressure, he reduces this divergence by adopting the group's reasoning. The greater the interest of the individual towards the group, the more the divergence process will be met. If he does not accept the group's opinion he is rejected by him. Thus, the individual has only two alternatives: either accepts the opinion of the group or leaves the group retaining his/her own idea.

To understand the phenomenon of delinquency, it is also necessary to analyze the various existential and behavioral universes of the drifting youth. Some "socially wrecked" may be victims of repression, political or religious persecution.

Many young delinquents, after an existential dissocial or antisocial path, possess sufficient internal resources to become a desirable.

The everyday reality shows that the borders of the passage from dissociative acts (vagabondage, begging) to serious crimes (theft, robbery, rape, murder) are quite fragile.

Causes of Juvenile Delinquency

In recent decades, many papers address the behavior of juvenile delinquents in a differentiated way, starting from the premise that there are many levels of causes and manifestations characteristic of social inadequacy and deviance, and these levels are structured as follows:

- Contextual factors of the deviance to which the child is subjected at home or in the extra-family environment: a broken family; inappropriate discipline (hyperpermisive or hyperpunitive climate); family vices; poor, unstable material situation; delinquent groups in the neighborhood;

- Behavioral problems that represent a specific way of adapting to the environment in relation to the age at which they occur;

- Dissociative attitudes in which the child discovers subjective reactions directed against authority, but without a serious inclination towards aggression: isolation, anxiety, hostility;

- Loss of child control by the family in violation of community norms or standards through moderate antisocial behavior: home run, vagabondage;

- Violating rules and laws through serious and very serious antisocial acts: theft, robbery, rape, murder.

Most infringements are committed in groups with a minor or adult leader, often criminal acts were organized by recidivists. The phenomenon has increased; the recidivism of juvenile delinquency is due to the increase in the degree of poverty of the numerous families and the ineffectiveness of some protection measures. The delinquents are young with antisocial behavior that refuses to change the way of existence characterized by antisocial acts.

The psychological, behavioral profile of the delinquent is represented by the following features: *marginal existence, inactivity, parasitism, rejection of moral values, dissociation between the personal and social Ego, absence of the existential*

temporal horizon and resentment against society. All of these traits are generating undesirable, dissociated and antisocial behaviors. Factors and causes of delinquency in the personality structure are less general, always concrete and related to existential conditions and events, to the educational process, to the specific way the individual interacts with the collectivity

Factors Facilitating the Appearance of Juvenile Delinquency

1. Internal factors

- *Heredity* -criminality (crime) is not transmitted through heredity as such, but only psychological anomalies that facilitate its appearance, of which we mention the low intelligence coefficient, poorly controlled conduct, the absence of moral sense;

- *Physical factors* - some psychologists and criminologists claim that juvenile delinquents would be inferior to other children of the same age from a physical point of view: height and weight, but case studies could not confirm it;

- *Physiological Factors* - It is recognized that glands with internal secretion (endocrine glands) play an important role in the expression of behavior, and behavior can be a crime factor (scandal, quarrel, fighting) when it is uncontrollably aggressive, as is the case with hyperthyroidism;

- *Intellectual deficiencies* - researches highlighted that mental debility has an influence on the increase of minor delinquency, but only on certain categories of offences such as verbal and physical aggressions;

- *Affectivity disorder* - the lack of affective maturation as affective disorder states produced by affective frustration, in too severe children or in cases of family disorganization is crimes-generating. Also, affective instability associated with aggression;

- *Temperament* - as an innate element of personality, has an important role to play in committing crimes at this age. For example, scandal and fighting offenses are more common in those with choleric temperament or extraverts, while the number of these offenses is lower among melancholy and phlegmatic, i.e. introverts;

- *Character Disorder* - because character is the face of expression of personality in relation to the world, its moral dimension, well-formed knowledge will inhibit criminal behaviors. Where deficiencies exist in the education of character, the phenomena of criminality will emerge at the so-called "troublemakers".

These children exhibit negative phenomena in behavior, such as impulsiveness and aggression, laziness and indolence, selfishness and stubbornness.

2. External Factors

Family - It is called by some sociologists, psychologists, pedagogues, the first school of humanity to which the "first school of humanness" can be added. The family influences the formation of the child's behavior primarily through parenting relationships. When one of the parents is a stepfather, he will generate in the child's soul a certain affective reserve and perhaps even a feeling of rejection. The attachment to the true parent left from the family (divorce, separation, or death) creates the child's emotional state of rejection or indifference and leads some to delinquent acts. There are situations where the family is made up of both natural parents, but the atmosphere is negative either because they are alcoholics or themselves delinquents. These extreme attitudes generate either an exaggerated exigency pushed to terror, or an indulgence that is not permissible, and the child tolerates any kind of behavior. The bullied child will seek out of the family through an aggressive behavior towards younger colleagues. The one who is too spoiled in the family will easily become a delinquent by appropriating goods that do not belong to him knowing that his parents will defend him. Parents will have to be concerned about giving the child a pattern of behavior that he can then imitate as a major citizen.

When the family's economic condition is precarious, there is a growing condition for the increase of theft crimes because the child does not have the necessary discernment to refrain his acquisition instinct, which acts with increased force in such situations. The young child is more likely to create problematic situations because it will polarize adult affection and will respond as being over-protected. The second-born in the family feels frustrated by the lack of power enjoyed by the older brother, although he benefits from his experience. Middle is the position in which conflicts reach the climax, because he/her cannot become the older or the eldest one.

The phenomenon of inadequacy and deviance correlates with certain limits of maternal competence (mother's discipline style, self-confidence, child's affection), with low family expectations, brutal, violent manifestations of authority over the child. Mothers of delinquent children have more frequent rejection attitudes towards them. Most studies have indicated the dependence of parental school success characterized by a nuanced and flexible combination of affection and

parental support (encouragement, advice, reward) of the child's school activity and control of this activity.

Conditions in the extra-family environment - if negative examples are used in the circle of friends or in the families of the child's neighbors, it will also easily be harmful to behaviors.

- *School* - it was found that the percentage of various crimes is greatly increased in children who do not attend school or those with a low frequency. It was also found that crimes are more frequent in the case of the weak at school, and especially among repeat students. The positive attitude of teachers, their pedagogical tact, their willingness to bring their students to heart, can have positive effects on the decrease of the percentage of crimes among the students. If, however, the teacher takes a severe and even terrifying exaggerated attitude, there is every chance of pushing students with a lean structure among juvenile delinquents.

- *Mass media* can influence juvenile delinquency in a negative way, said Berkowitz[3] a psychologist in the US, in one of his researches where watching TV or cinema leads to increased aggression and criminality among young people. If the role of the delinquent is interpreted by an actor sympathetic to children, the negative effects are greater, the children striving to imitate him. Literature, movies, computer gaming programs that glorify crime, rape, or crime, are a real drug for children, promoting their behaviors as they are read and seen.

Educational measures are recommended: psychomotor rehabilitation in cases of psychic instability; Changing parenting habits in a too rigid family environment; sport or other group and team activities; psychotherapy of minors and parents; placement of children in re-education centers; freedom supervised by parents / guardians; social investigations conducted by competent persons at the request of the judicial authorities; judging juveniles in court; outpatient medical treatment; hospitalization to recovery in a medical institute.

Errors in primary socialization - The main effects of forms of ill-treatment on the personality of the child and on his ability to adapt to school and personality formation are the following:

⬧ *Physical Abuse*: it is expressed in various gestures, ranging from excessive corporal punishment to life threatening;

⬧ *Neglect*: occurs in all situations where parents do not meet the child's basic needs: diet, clothing, living conditions, medical care or supervision;

⬧ *Emotional Abuse*: occurs in any situation where parents are unable to engage in a positive emotional relationship with the child and try to compensate for this lack by satisfying his material needs;

⬧ *Sexual Abuse*: is considered the most psychologically traumatic, because the child's silence is ensured through corruption, blackmail, and the child feels guilty of what is happening to him.

The content of socialization has a psychological dimension - *the maturity of the young* - and also a cultural dimension - *the internalization of social norms* - and a sociological one - *learning with the social roles and developing the corresponding behaviors*. As a continuous process, socialization is accomplished through various mechanisms, such as: successive adoption of statuses and roles, social learning, institutionalized learning, play, imitation, identification of juvenile delinquency.

Conclusions

The work contains a focus on the influence of the adolescent group on the formation of the individual and its personality structure, as well as its influence on young people who learn delinquent behaviors. The dimensions of the phenomenon are out of control because all the studies and researches focused on consequences and rehabilitation measures, but less on the determinants and causes of the juvenile delinquency phenomenon. At the end of the paper we have listed some educational measures that, if implemented during schooling (counseling hours, may lead to a reduction in the number of young delinquents, and anti-social behaviors that can also be corrected by specialists if they are known at the right time.

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