

# THE EXPERIENCE OF GROUP AS A FACTOR OF SOCIALIZATION

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**Abstract:** *The process of socialization is not achieved suddenly, but gradually, influenced by factors whose importance varies from one society to another. The most important such factors are: family, school, peer groups, workplace etc. The peer group and friendship have a major role especially in socialization of adolescents and young people.*

**Keywords:** *the peer groups, friendship, adolescence, anticipatory socialization.*

One of the most important factors in the socialization process, along with family and school, is **the peer group**, understood as a group of friends with the same age and similar social statuses. As the child grows, he is tempted to become more independent in relation to his parents or with the family of which he belongs. And this desire for independence is channeled in the direction of association with other children/young people of close age. The peer group and the type of socialization which it assumed plays a crucial role especially in childhood or adolescence, after which its influence begins to fade. In the context of socialization, **the peer group has certain defining characteristics** (Borgatta, Montgomery 2000).

First, it is par excellence a voluntary association, being, in fact, the first association of its kind attended by most children. Freedom of choice has therefore a very high degree, although often it is not properly acknowledged; children become members of a group rather than unrestricted exercise of this freedom of choice, but rather leaves carried by a certain instinct of association with those of a chief with them.

Another characteristic of the peer group is that association is between people who have the same social status. It does not follow that there is an absolute equality among all children / young people who belong to a group. There are, no doubt, some differences of status in terms of the

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position occupied by each member within the group, but this position is not established on a hierarchical basis, but based on prestige or through negotiation. Therefore, the relations within the group are based on deep ties of friendship, caring for each other and relative equality.

The third characteristic of the peer group is the fact that it is the best place in which the children show their independence from adults and from their control. Which sometimes translates into practicing deviant behavior; juvenile delinquency has always been a central concern for sociological research, which showed that the entourage is one of the most important causes that generate this kind of delinquency.

The fourth characteristic of the peer group in relation with socialization process is that it is marked by a separation of the groups of children according to their gender. This fact would create visible differences between the modes of organizing groups of girls in relation to those consisting of boys, but also an identification of increasingly more accentuated with the children of the same gender, and developing somewhat hostile and stereotypical attitudes towards members of the opposite sex.

A basic component of adolescence seen as an essential stage in the process of socialization is **friendship**. It involves interaction between people focused on establishing intimate relationships, in which secrets are revealed and communication can be performed often without requiring of unnecessary words and explanations, where feelings often prevail in the detriment of personal interest.

Majority of sociological research conducted on children shows that boys and girls have a relatively similar number of friends (Helgeson 2012). But there are also some differences, social relationships which established boys are generally larger than those which lay down the girls. Thus, the girls dominant interaction is dyad, they dedicating most of their free time for discussions with best friend, while boys show a growing interest towards the activities in larger group. Boys aged up to 10 years are more attracted to team games than girls. In fact, the girls show the inclination to include in the sphere of primary social relations only friends, while boys are more open, including both friends and non-friends. We may say that girls friendship is characterized by a higher degree of privacy in relation to specific boys friendship.

Therefore, during childhood and adolescence, boys and girls perceive friendship differently; girls focus on the emotional aspect – is my girl best friend that with which I best communicate, to which I may confess the

most hidden secrets of my private life, and, in turn, she reveals me her secrets - while boys attribute rather instrumental role - is regarded as a friend that boy with which I do something together or participate in a particular activity. Friendship between girls is dominant characterized by sharing/disclosing intimate information, in contrast with this way of understanding friendship, boys understand friendship as a way to participate in certain activities, whose meanings is deeply valued. Differences in perception, however, have direct connection with the type of behavior adopted; the girls talk on the phone with friends longer than boys; when are connected to the Internet, women send more emails in which they communicate to friends diverse emotional feelings; and when they are in groups, girls/women show the tendency to talk more about their lives, to make various confidences and offer more support to friends. Various studies carried out in American universities have shown that 5 in 10 males and 7 in 10 females say it is very important to "help others who are in difficulty" (Myers 2010).

Despite these obvious differences, there are certain similarities in terms of the way of perceiving the friendship by the girls, respectively boys (Hegelson 2012). The first similarity considers in that type of expectations in the person who is seen as friend. Both girls and boys want first as their friends to be someone who trust, who gives support when they need, who can entertain or relax, and who communicate better. Although there are differences of nuance, related to the predominantly intimate character of female friendship conversations, however, both girls and boys devoted much time spent in informal conversation with friends. Moreover, although friendships between boys/men do not have an intimate character as pronounced as in the case of girls/women and did not based on providing of a powerful emotional support, however, boys valorizes, in turn, these features of friendship, they agree that friendship is not total indifference and lack of empathy. Finally, one last question about the perception of friendship on which girls and boys agree on is the belief that, by definition, friendship implies an equal status. Masters and slaves cannot be friends in real sense; the relationship of friendship involves an equal distribution of power.

Some sociologists have conducted research among adolescents about their career aspirations. The conclusions these studies were the following (Matlin 2008):

- Both adolescent males and females have equivalent aspirations in terms of achieving diplomas that certifying excellence in a particular area.

- Adolescent females are more likely than adolescent males to choose careers that are non-traditional for their gender.

- When considering their future careers, adolescent females are more likely than adolescent males to emphasize the importance of marriage and children.

- Parents are more likely to let daughters make their own decisions about careers.

- Adolescent females shall inform wider than adolescent males about their future careers.

**Adolescence** is a period marked by a strong social orientation, where young people influence each other, the opinion of the peer group weighing much higher than the individual opinions. Moreover, it has been traditionally the perspective of classical-style sociology analyzed adolescence. It was centrally concerned with external factor, the role that others play in the emergence of behavior problems in general and particularly related to school (Ritzer 2007). From here result a concept with a powerful negative charge namely the peer pressure, which, in this case, suggests quite clear that the fundamental cause of deviant behavior specific to the youngsters is association with a group of delinquents. Another object of research of the peer pressure was formed by factors which contribute to the adoption of behaviors that endanger the health of young people, such as smoking, alcohol, drugs etc. The specific culture of a group inclined to adopt such behavior is often strongly internalized by members of the peer group in question; the main cause of smoking in early age is entourage - the situation is similar to alcohol and drug consumption. There is thus a dark side of adolescent friendship relations, and social scientists do not have hesitated to analyze it.

But this perspective is not singular; unlike, or more precisely, in strongly contrast with this sociological view, there is a new direction in which it insists on the positive implications that it has the adolescent friendship in the process of socialization as a whole. Meetings between young people and the process of developing groups of friends are not from start synonymous with the adoption of antisocial behavior; the reciprocal can be found with greater frequency. Thus, normal behavior can be stimulated, the assimilation of values and learning skills that have integrated social role and dealing with others ideas is capable of stimulate the adoption of tolerant behavior and receptivity to the diversity it provides social life.

From all observations related to peer group follows that it is closely connected with the problem of self-identity and self-confidence. This is the only explains that, in some cases, the attachment to friends/entourage may be even stronger than that to the members of their families, a situation most commonly encountered in the case of adolescents, age at which it can be seen, in fact, an increasing aggravation of "conflict between generations".

Moreover, the peer group is manifested differently in terms of specific socialization of children / young people in relation to adults and this is in triple sense (Haralambos, Holborn 2008):

1. In peer groups the children take part in making the rules rather than simply following rules passed down to them.

2. Peer groups tend to seek more immediate gratification than formal agents of socialization, like family or school, who are concerned with long-term adjustment to society.

3. Peer groups provide an alternative to adult standards and may have values which are different from those of adults. This can lead to socialization conflict, when the demands of the peer group contradict rules that derive from parental authority. What parents forbid may be allowed or even recommended by peer group.

From a sociological point of view, the main characteristic of adolescence is the desire to distinguish them from the parents, which is a symptom of the need for independence.

During this period we can talk about replacing the primary socialization with anticipatory socialization, in which occurs the preparation and learning of new social roles that are desired and it is assumed that will be undertaken during adulthood. Therefore, anticipatory socialization prepares us for the roles that are to accomplish in future in the society. The most common example of this type of socialization is that children wear clothes of their parents or borrow their objects - makeup kit, the bags of the parents who goes to work, car keys etc. - to mimic their activities; in this case, they experiences certain roles specific to adults, roles they will actually perform much later in life (Johnson 2007). Anticipatory socialization manifest not only in childhood or adolescence, but, in a somewhat different form, it is practiced along the entire life.

It can be seen therefore that the most important task of adolescence is shaping its own identity; while in the traditional societies, this identity was transmitted automatically by affiliation with adults group, in

contemporary societies, every young person needs to build by his own his self-identity. Thus, a reorientation of adolescents is happening; from family to friends with the same age, who share similar problems and have common interests.

In addition, this self-identity becomes more accentuated since the young person becomes an active person on labor market and can manifest his skills and knowledge in an institutional framework

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