



The Progressive Conformity Compulsion to a Synchronized Group Among Adolescents in the United States

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Abstract. As our technological world continues to evolve, people are encountering different forms of pressure incrementally, both physical and mental. The world for teenagers has completely reshaped itself into another form compared to the childhood their parents had experienced. The importance of education had become evident while the pressure from daily school life is haunting the students down. The new Generation Z are experiencing a fundamental shift in the structure of our society. This ongoing change has generated a variety of difficulties that are unseen before. The compulsion to conform to their peers willingly or unwillingly has become one of the greatest challenges they currently confront. This progressive conformity has made its way to effect adolescents both positively and negatively. In this research paper, I will be identifying how different types of conformity occurs and what urges them to become inevitable upon certain populations; following with potential solutions to solve this issue.

Keywords: Adolescents, Conformity, Peer pressure, Youth Gang

1 Introduction

Development of self, independence and recalcitrant actions characterizes adolescents. Conflicts with parents and “pursuit of independence out of the family environment” cause them to consult their peers [1]. Younger adolescents, age ranges around 16, tend to avoid interaction with parents. Escaping parental governance and instigating disagreements with parents seems to become a fashionable trend for them [2]. Family cohesion has been noted to be the utmost important factor for a harmonious atmosphere. However, miscommunication and disrespect towards the adolescent decisions can cause a divergence among the parent-adolescents relationship. This escalating disagreement within the parent-adolescent relationship can cause adolescents with the conception of individualism. A group of adolescents that share the same conceptuality can possibly assemble and form their own gang. The reason explaining the tendency for adolescents to form or join these gangs can be traced from their naive perception on what is the proper way for self-definition. Heavier exposure can cause them to execute “wrongful or delinquent activities” [3]. A study about 798 high school students shows

that “59 was identified as gang members, 75 as peripheral youth, and 664 as non-gang youth” [1]. Violence and abuse were then committed by the delinquent youth or as stated, youth gang members.

Synchrony and conformity towards other adolescents are also promoted by peer pressure. Peer pressuring refers to when people, adolescents as the majority, tend to perform actions or conceive thoughts for the sense of belonging and recognition [4]. Opposing from gaining independence as stated in the previous paragraph, peer pressure can construct both positive or negative effects. The uttermost appealing result would be gaining confidence and being assertive, being able to attend and shine during school activities.[4]. Inversely, negative outcomes can issue from substantial synchronized peers performing delinquent activities or contiguously perpetuating them to join. The conformity occurring among the majority adolescents tends to lead to their peers [5]. As mentioned by Kathy, adolescents are more willing to conform to constructive than unconstructive behaviors [5]. This paper investigates the positive and negative effects of peer pressure and further provides informative suggestions for improving adolescent development.

2 The Negativity of Conformity Towards Peers

The predominant recusant actions mainly are derived from the parents’ tendency to seize full control of their children’s decisions [6]. However, mentioned in Pickhardt’s finding, their “good intention” often results in a strong disapproval behavior reacted by the adolescents due to their “shortsighted blindness”, since they had never physically and intellectually grown this way before; and this is usually accompanied with a display of individuality, and recalcitrant to cherish their parental expectations [6]. Differ from kids, adolescents are exposed to a more unsealed world, where seducing and misleading lure are inconspicuous. They do not possess the full ability to accurately recognize the danger and what is beneficial or harmful to them. As stated by the Stanford Children’s Health Organization, teen’s brain is not fully developed until they reach the age around 25 [7]. In fact, recent research asserts that adolescents process information with their amygdala, which manipulates you emotionally. Conversely, adults operate with the pre-frontal cortex, which processes information rationally, foreseeing the long-term consequences, then makes the wisest judgement. Consequently, adolescents would seek escape from their parental control. According to MedicineNet, the top three causes of conflict among the parent-children relationship are lack of brain development, striving for independence and not being controlled [3]. As a result, adolescents struggling with family disagreement could potentially turn to their peers to seek pressure relief. Since they have the sense of unbelonging at home, they would demonstrate conformity towards their peers in order to fit in. However, synchronized peer groups might have pernicious influence over them.

Blindly conforming towards peers under aggressive emotions is dangerous for adolescents. They could possibly smoke, drinking alcohol and even joining youth gang groups. Inversely, “synchrony can promote conformity, aggression and destructive obe-

dience” [8]. Severe illness, prison and death are all common consequences once adolescents are in touch with deleterious chemicals. According to Morton and his team, there was 23% (n=7784) of juveniles smoking or drinking [9]. Relating to the cultural evolutionary trade-off of ritualistic synchrony, synchrony was proven to promote aggressive actions and destructive disobedience [8]. In the research study conducted to analyze conformity among adolescents, half of the conformity towards peers were unconstructive behaviors, comprised actions such as smoking and drinking [5].

The worst scenario conformity can end up with is joining youth gang. According to research from Sam Houston University, any durable and street-oriented groups of adolescents that present or relates themselves with any kind of illegal activities are recognized as “youth gang” [10]. However, most of these gangs are simply a pack of unorganized angry teenagers rather than a well-structured organization. Factors contributing adolescents to joining the youth gang include family disagreement, peer pressure and depression; and peer pressure is the greatest contributor. In a study conducted by Sam Houston State University, an approximate number of two percent of all adolescents in the United States were said to be members of youth gangs. The age of 14 was considered with the highest involvement, and these adolescents in the study who the gang are from all type of backgrounds and races [10]. Rich or poor, black, white, Hispanic, Chinese... were all part of the gang. However, the majority attended gang activities only thinking that it was “cool”. The myth that glorifies gangs’ presence and deceiving words told by other gang members lured these unprotected souls into the wrong path. In the same research by Sam Houston State university, youth gangs as such carry a high turnover rate of 36 percent. Meaning that there were old participants leaving and new comer joining. The data estimated that there were an approximate number of 400,00 gang participants leaving successively, some leaving after around a few months and some leaving after for a few years. However, roughly the same number of newcomers are entering. Even though the majority realize that the money, fame and all kinds of goods that lure them to join gang were instead not practical. Young juveniles who have just faced society are still tempted by them.

3 The Positivity of Conformity Towards Peers

Peer pressure could also resolve with beneficial behaviors such as developing interpersonal skills, enhancing team collaboration skills and forming study groups. According to the research studies, when detecting the neural sensitivity of adolescents when they do choose to conform, they tend to conform towards constructive influencers rather than peers with unconstructive behaviors. Luckily, we should note that when adolescents do choose to conform, it is more likely for them to appeal to positive and constructive feedbacks than unconstructive criticisms [5]. The basins of constructive behaviors would include working hard in school, beneficial and healthy social habits and positive social interactions. Absorbing this pressure, students would eventually set a social norm. In this case, students are competing against each other to achieve higher goals, winning the group’s respect. By utilizing peer pressure positively, students are better able to develop greater skills practiced in altruistic behaviors. Even though peer

pressuring was generally considered a negative influence, many authors like Rosenberg proposed ideas as such to allow us to think alternatively. For example, study groups are the most common type of peer conformity inside a school. Adolescents are likely to join a study group when their close friends are positive about learning.

4 Solution for Negativity of Conformity

4.1 Provision for social and economic opportunities

One part of gang registration can be traced from adolescents that are excluded from the legitimate labor market, who is in desperate need for economical support. This could possibly be resolved with opportunity provision. Opportunity provision is a strategy which the government would offer educations or job-related training. In this way, adolescents that are relying on gang for survival have a chance to manipulate their own life, have a life they want or even seek redemption. Some of the most common forms of opportunity provision can take form in tutoring, small classes, job-training followed with job opportunities, and etc.

4.2 Study Group

Conformity could also be represented as a study group or a beneficial group of adolescents aimed to promote appropriate and valuable suggestions towards each other. Creating a healthy learning habit, pursuing for better and practicing interpersonal skills are recognized as benefits gained from a study group. Study group itself is merely a name representing any form of group, gathering people around for the purpose of learning. These individually formed small groups can assist a variety of students with different personalities in intellectual development.

The most obvious beneficiary from such groups are extroverts and auditory learners. Since they are willing to speak up and are positive about group discussion, learning would be much easier if they were to gather around and share ideas and teach each other. Then for reserved students, forcing themselves to join a discussion group would greatly aid their abilities in communicating with other people, particularly strangers. Introverts in particular, would need such skills (being able to interact with people comfortably) in order to proceed in any academic field.

Furthermore, according to tutordoctor.com, forming individual study groups can help reduce anxiety. Such group would people allow the possibility to encounter people with similar problems, because everyone within the circle feels the same nervousness towards the same exam, school work, etc. They create valuable bonds and support for each other.

4.3 Preventing from entry

Prevention programs from the government targeting adolescents that are trying to get involved with gang activities can very effectively reduce the number of overall gang

population. Intervention programs such as providing sanctuary for these young gang members and showing examples of the lives of gang members in prison could potentially guide them away from involving in these activities. Enforcement of lawful suppression towards the more violent and older criminal members can intimidate newcomers from joining as well as breaking the gang from inside out. The number one reason why youth gangs are still active is because of the high turnover rate. With laws set for prevention, intervention and suppression, the recruitment of newcomers would decrease progressively.

5 Limitations

However, even these strategies contain its limitations. First, adolescents that were already members of the gang for a long period of time and have earned a seat in the main force. This type of adolescents is very hard to persuade or even force them to leave because they have already accomplished massive achievements for the gang. The gang would be the main part of their lives and if they are forced out, they become a nobody, instead, they are leaders within the gang. Besides this, adolescents process information with their amygdala, which manipulates you emotionally. And the stronger the push is, the stronger the rebellious behavior might become.

Second, Adolescents that have close family members, relatives or close friends in a gang's cabinet. If their parents are participants of a gang, their kid would likely result in gang activities as well with or without their own will. Having a close friend being part of the gang's cabinet group would cause them to enjoy the power of controlling others. If multiple friends are within the gang and are unwilling to change, due to the pressure, it is extremely hard for them to escape.

6 Conclusion

The progression of conformity towards a synchronized group can very possibly lead to desirable outcomes. Many forms of peer pressuring have evolved into motivation for learning. However, depending of the frame of reference, this progressing conformity can be a double-edged sword. Negative influencers can induce teenagers resulting in youth gangs, smoking, drinking, and etc.

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