

CHIMERICAL GROUPS IN SCHOOL AS A SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL PHENOMENON

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Abstract. The problem discussed is related to the need for clear socio-pedagogical parameters of (criminal groups) gangs in schools. The different interpretations link them to difficult children, youth subcultures, and street gangs while chimerical groups are a possible conceptual projection on them. We are attempting at a socio-pedagogical reading of a community of children and adolescents with deviant behavior but not juvenile offenders, which makes us face legal terms and delinquent behavior. A chimerical group of dealers, pimps, prostitutes and other subjects with deviant behavior at school imitates the behavior of criminal groups in society, borrowing mechanisms and means and also creating their own social networks. Unlike real life criminal groups, though, chimerical groups are a subject of education activities as a function of the school institution. The most timely the pedagogical intervention of the school institution (not only as socializing and training), the greater the chances these children and adolescents' lives to be saved and their personality preserved.

Keywords: chimerical group; gang; difficult children; youth subculture; clans; identity; prevention; re-socialization; education/pedagogy

Introduction

“Chimerical groups” in Bulgarian schools appeared in the period of democratic transition that Bulgaria has been going through since 1989. This is the time of creation, but also the time of separation with values affirmed for years in Bulgarian society (Peteva et al., 2011). One of the effects of „Heidegger“ is obtained, that of „no longer“ and „not yet“ in terms of an entire value system which has neither analogue nor substitutes. Modern times suggest radical solutions which turned out to be impossible for many. 25 years later, the picture has not changed significantly. The Bulgarian school, which is an institutional mediator of changes, had to endure reforms that continue without much success. Whatever the European standards in education, they should be rationalized and adapted. Results are not available where they have been imposed forcefully, and administratively. The Bulgarian educational space has become hostage to changes that

it is not ready for. The children's community is virtually devoid of monitoring and ideals. Alienation from school is only a manifestation of the alienation of families and a lack of care on the part of society in the long run. Bulgarian school gave rise to gangs, formations and communities that repeat patterns of behavior of adults with antisocial behavior. Undisturbed, given their anonymity and mass character, they have created their resistant characteristics, mainly related to aggression, bullying and violence in school. Even nowadays, some educators do not want to acknowledge their existence and believe they are all responsibility of the school psychologist. The school psychologist, however, is unable to make their individual or collective profile, given the exponential growth of these groups and the constant conquering of new spaces in schools, including the virtual one.

What is a „chimerical group“

A chimerical group at school is a criminal group, built on the model of antisocial, criminal groups in society. It has the same social arsenal of dealers, pimps, prostitutes, racketeers, bosses, blackmailers, traders as a potential criminogenic community. Moreover, children chimerical groups are more creative than those of adults, and also much more mobile. This is so because children hold the key to cyberspace without which the modern child or school are inconceivable. These groups' „chimerical“ character is defined by the opportunity to be anonymous as well as the possibility to transform anonymous space into a public one through the respect others have for its members due to the fear they impose.

In scientific knowledge, chimerical group are first mentioned in Russian literature in 1980s together with the 'perestroika' syndrome. „It is no wonder that group crimes are socially more dangerous than individual ones. Psychologically, the group strengthens the resolve of the wavering and creates the possibility of recruiting new people“ (Enikeev, 1996).

In Western literature the problem of gangs of juveniles is seen in the context of deviation and delinquency. As it is stressed upon in several studies, street gangs are the basis of deviant behavior of adolescents and the main mechanism for joining them is related to the extent to which children feel inferior to others, to their identity problems and to the deviations in their socio-psychosocial development. Taylor (2013) explores the mechanisms of recruitment, inclusion and socialization of young people in various criminal groups and their behavioral transformations related to various behavioral and oppositional disorders, disobedience and developing patterns of antisocial, deviant and delinquent behavior. A key question in the literature describing the subculture of criminal youth groups are the mechanisms of recruitment and socialization of young people and reasons why they join various chimerical groups - gangs (Klein, 1997; Grant & Feimer, 2007; Klein & Maxson, 2006). The following reasons why young people become gang members have been identified: (1) to belong to a group and have fun; (2) because my friends are in the same gang; (3) to feel accepted by others

within the group; (4) to have friends; and (5) because my family does not care about me.

In the Bulgarian educational space there are several studies on the issue. According to Toshev (2003) „the past century has given rise to many different “chimerical” groups with antisocial behavior“. Many of the authors believe that an in-depth exploration of the relationship between „chimerical school groups“ and „public chimerical groups“ should be conducted (Peteva et al., 2011), in order to establish what common antisocial values and technology of organization and manifestation they share. In the context of „the problem of difficult children“ (Usheva, 1997), we can investigate the mechanisms of antisocial behavior in teenagers, including „bad decisions, bad goals, bad environment; deformed pedagogical functions of the family; conflict with their peers and a mechanism of bad educational impact“. The interrelation between civilization, anomie and behavioral deficits allows us to talk about „exhaustion of the resource for reconciliation and balancing of the contradictions between cultural and civilizational trends“ linked to behavioral abnormalities (Karagiozov, 2001). Social and individual forms of alienation are expressed from both development of the society and the individual, and the critical conditions in this development. Their psychological equivalent is frustration that becomes sufficiently increased in periods of transition.

The turning of the deviant norm in a source of power is a part of the problem of the „ineffectiveness of the now-functioning legal system“ (Galabov, 1997). The basis for such a claim can be found in the fact that the rules do not exist independently by themselves, but are a part of a system in which each norm is linked to all others. The synergizing of the regulatory systems does not exclude the hegemony of law that actually triggers this process. The legal regulation uses the term „offense“ or a series of offenses but is unable to demonstrate objectivity in order to be able to discuss behavior. At school, however, the primary marker for personality is behavior, including the deviant one.

The interaction of different legal systems, and the conflict between them can become a prerequisite for deviant behavior to emerge. The deviant norm is indirectly linked to the problem of human identity in the sense that the deviant personality involves rejection by the community because it is maladaptive. Thus, each identity is relevant and not only the person is dependent on the group, but also the group is dependent on the behavior of the individual. The negative definition for deviation imposed by the community, however, is related to the behavior as a whole but not to separate acts, violations or delinquencies.

Socio-pedagogical features of the chimerical group in school

“Chimerical groups” in school are the new school power, they are in charge and it is the ‘bad’ that serve as a model for the ‘good’. The mechanisms of entering and leaving those groups are not studied but they are definitely not made of outsiders. It is often that the members of those groups are excellent students and/or come from wealthy families; their goals by entering the group is not only to feel the thrill they see in the movies but

to also exercise forms of control over others. The 'Chimerical group' is like a phantom; at school it is spoken of in secret but its arrogant power can be felt and is demonstrated everywhere the group can reach. Chimerical groups are omnipresent, and are not a privilege of the ghettos or mainstream schools.

The chimerical group is recognizable as a configuration, suggestion and expression of influence in every Bulgarian school that prefers to remain silent about this fact. Of course, the forms and range of activities of chimerical groups are different, but their essence does not change: they dictate the rules of violence according to their understanding and practices. In elite schools such groups hide behind the top grades the students receive and wealthy parents who can, at any time, cope with a problem with their children at school. This gives an added incentive to the members of such groups and security about their domination over others in their desire for adventure. The groups recruit other children in different ways, but most often by force and bullying or special forms of violence inflicted on the victims. In mainstream schools, things are far clearer: you must choose a side: the strong or the weak.

Chimerical groups operate mostly within one school only. Their locality, however, is only an illusion because they take over new spaces at school by the hour. Manipulation through social networks allows these groups to create parallel worlds and conquer new territories of influence.

Often behavioral responses in "chimerical groups" are an expression of their „chimerical psyche“ related to the adaptation to new cultural or social environment. One of the peculiarities of the chimerical psyche are the „accentuations“. They are not classic cases of psychopathy but are not normal psychological phenomena either (Leonhard, 1968). „Accentuations“ as existing on the border of „norm“ and „pathology“ suggest (1) various extreme situations where the subject is unable to meet the requirements of the situation; (2) accentuations can be temporary and transient conditions that to some extent support the social adaptation and socialization. This allows the existence of somewhat positive reserve in accentuations, although they become an expression of a disharmonious personality (Chankova et al., 2016).

Chimerical groups profess a different "value system" with mostly informal relations. They consolidate on the basis of common interests, attitudes and expectations. In „chimerical groups" derogations from the norm are not acceptable and are part of a requirements which are not subject to any comment or discussion. Any attempt towards individualization of performances is punished in order to continuously enhance the integration of other members into the group. This creates conditions for conflicts of chimerical groups and their members with the social and educational environment at school. The result for many of these students is a school disadaptation, disintegration and the start to criminal behavior which unlocks the possibility for secondary criminogenic risks. Such students find it difficult to adapt in school class environment, to learn and develop in both the educational and social spheres at school. The natural conflict of the members of „chimeric groups" is the conflict with the „norms" and the „subjects" who impose them. It can hardly be overcome by prohibitions and punishments in the

school environment. It is necessary to search for mechanisms to resolve conflicts of a similar nature and the application of preventive and integrative practices.

Chimerical groups change the identity of the adolescent, establishing a pattern of behavior that determines the social fate of the participants. They also create a new sub-culture that is relatively comprehensive and is maintained as such over time. Adolescents' deviant behavior in school creates both „executioners“ and victim subjects who experience the consequences of bullying, aggression and violence. The constant frustration felt by the children- victims at school every day, the fear they experience, turns them into martyrs. There is no worse humiliation than that of a child because the child has neither the strength nor the foundations of an established personality to find security within one's self. The “chimeric group” of the offenders and aggressors is unnamable and indefinable, placed beyond the discursive practices in schools, which should be carefully studied.

This process is always a question of power, but also of possibilities for resistance. Therefore, together with the consolidation of chimeric groups in the school, new forms of resistance against them will emerge. This is a pedagogical reserve, which should be used by pedagogical professionals as a prospect to solve a problem of this nature.

Socio-pedagogical problems in the study of chimerical groups at school

Social pedagogy (Stefanova, 2014) prefers to make use of terms such as „deviation“ and „delinquency“ when referring to adolescents with deviant behavior. Most often it is assumed that „deviation“ is a type of anti-social behavior associated with violating of the „moral norms. Delinquency is antisocial behavior linked to the offense and violation of legal norms. With both types of deviant behavior in children and adolescents re-socialization is needed as a socio-pedagogical corrective. Pedagogical activities should be in the foreground, however, since „deviant behavior implies interference in social behavior acts of the child. This behavior should be not corrected but transformed by pedagogical influences and interactions“(Gospodinov, 2010).

This idea makes a distinction between „corrective action“ imposed by „re-socialization“ and „educational activity“ related to the transformation of human behavior and personality. In pedagogy, the occurrence of interactions between adults and children is at the level of values and their formation or revaluation as such.

Attributing the idea of „deviant behavior“ to children older than 14 is risky for society, insofar as it is encoded on a subconscious level in one's personality. The consequences of organized and targeted value attitude, and especially one marked negatively, are unpredictable in time. Such attitudes give the person the stigma of collective contempt dressed in the formal armor of „care“ for the other. The search for discrete forms of communication with children at risk through education and mediation in the classroom could mitigate the social impact of punishments, isolation, classifications.

Few studies bring together social factors of antisocial behavior, psychological foundations of the personality and the possibilities for educational impact. A systematic

approach would allow a much more accurate assessment of the personality of the adolescent, who is still uncertain about its direction in life. The question we are interested in is how to find the positives in every social experience, even when it threatens both the community and the person him/herself. From socio-pedagogical point of view the concept behind „deviation“ is not only in finding the reason for its emerging but also in the attempt to overcome both its internal and external factors.

Chimerical groups at school are an expression of a clan spirit characteristic of the postmodern time. Clan-belonging is an attempt to strengthen the collective „we“ as far as both group and clan identities are „objectively psyche“ of archetypes, aspirations, fantasies, or totems which meet strong resistance in the monad nature of human individuality“ (Mafezoli, 2011). The moving forces of people, including children and adolescents, must be internal and the society must allow them to manifest. With antisocial behavior, differentiating amongst communities, groups, clans is a matter of life and death; however, distinguishing between personality and community will always be a matter of choice. Regardless of the universal clan spirit of the time we live in, protecting the „I“ in different social situations is life-saving. In this sense, pedagogical strategies and technologies applied to children and adolescents with antisocial behavior in school must be not just „person-oriented“ but also „person-affirming.“

Chimerical groups are part of the new social and pedagogical situation in Bulgarian school which is still in the process of democratic change and social transformation. As such, they must be well studied and familiar in order for the reasons for their existence and negative effects on children and school community to be removed or restricted. Success is achieved “once the causes and factors for the appearance of such groups are diminished and not when such a group is destroyed“ (Pisarevskaya, 2012).

Chimerical groups as criminal groups, communities and subcultures in school have their own sustainable socio-pedagogical features which include new regressed values system, accentuations, educational dis-adaptation, aggression and criminogenic potential.

The socio-pedagogical issues of chimerical groups at school are of a different nature and thus there are different possibilities for solution bearing in mind both the anti-social behavior of children and adolescents and the psychological foundations of personality and potential possibilities to influence the group. In this sense, it will be pedagogically correct to claim that the pedagogical resources of the professionals must comply with the specific personality and situation. Social pedagogues have the opportunity to choose their own strategies and always must keep the deep code of a child's soul because „In the kingdom of the purposes, everything has either value or dignity. Any value can be replaced by higher. Dignity has no price“ (Kant, 1974).

Social connotations of linguistic behavior regarding the term „chimerical group“ (empirical survey)

The study aims at the social connotations of language behavior regarding the term „chimerical group“ included in the performative mode of language (speech) use by

testing the idea of social connotations of language behavior in the context of sociolinguistics. It examines speech practices of students, teachers and professionals regarding the term „chimerical group“ included in the performative mode of use. The communicative success of the studied speech community determines the value related thinking strategies. These definitions, appeals, promises and threats include the term „chimerical group“ in value types and behavioral attitudes.

The methodological basis of the empirical research includes: (i) Austin's (1962) theory of speech distinguishes among three kinds of speech acts: (1) those limited to speaking itself - locution; (2) illocution - speech acts that consist in doing in (when) saying; (3) an action is performed by (through) saying - performative speech acts. The object of study in the case are the “performative utterances” at school. It is the performative that is important as a type of conventional thinking of the participants. According to Austin (1962), one can use performative utterances to exercise judgement- ‘verdictative’, exert influence or exercise power ‘exercitive’, assume obligation or declare intention ‘commissive’, adopt attitude or express feeling ‘behabitive’, clarify reasons, argument or communication ‘expositive’. Performative utterances and performative mode of use of the term “chimerical group” will give us a clear linguistic picture of the studied phenomenon and its social projections; (ii) The theory of communicative success - „perlocutive effect“ in speech communication and speech practices of the entities in the social sphere, developed in the writings of Van Dijk (1977) and Bilmes (1986) and building on Austin's theory with respect to “how specific a speech act is - there is an activity or action happening in it, conventions are involved, reactions are manifested, i.e. the space comes to life because of the communication” (Mangancheva, 2013). The study relies on the idea of „perlocutive effect“ on speech practices in school and on the occasion of extending the notion of „chimerical group“ in the performative mode of use. The study does not seek common references and interpretations of the communicators or general schemes of thinking but aims to classify the value orders of thinking in pedagogical specialists and the ability or inability to reach consensus through language and its public use. In this case, the performative speech acts are institutional in origin, and this is what makes them important to us. This study does not relate to any other classifications of the performatives. The indicators use the achievements of Bulgarian linguists (Jereva, 2011), to classify the performative utterances in Bulgarian language.

They include: verdictive modality - evaluation, opinion or approval; exercitive modality - order justification command; behabitive modality - apology, congratulation, praise, invocation; commissive modality – a promise, threat, taking responsibility; expositive modality - I answer, I prove, I admit, I illustrate, I assume.

The study went all the way in: (a) including of „chimerical group“ as a concept in the „performative mode” of institutional use; (b) search of communicative success - „perlocutive effect“ of the communicators: students, teachers, school counselors; (c) consolidating of the speech communities in the school institution and its public linguistic space; (d) social connotations of linguistic behavior.

The aim of the study is to research into performative speech act in the school institution with respect to „chimerical group“ as a concept in the context of communicative success (perlocutive effect) of the participants. Within the framework of the survey, 90 students in the secondary level from various schools, 45 teachers and 15 school counselors are asked to evaluate the attitude towards gangs at school, using the code name „Chimerical group“ and a scale from 1 to 5. The results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Chimeric group in performative mode of linguistic use

„Chimerical group“ in performative mode of linguistic use	Students	Teachers	Counselors	Analysis
A “chimerical group” at school is a criminal group of children and adolescents which follows the behavioral pattern borrowed from the criminal world of adults.	43%	49%	23%	verdictive modality - evaluation, opinion or approval <i>Teachers and students both have the same percentages regarding verdictive modality (opinion and evaluation) in respect with chimerical groups in performative mode. This modality of expression seem to be with insufficient linguistic priority</i>
The “chimerical group” at school must be located, its activities restricted and if possible eliminated as type of a criminal behavior.	4%	9%	12%	exercitive modality – order, justification, command; <i>Putting the chimerical group in performative mode of exercitive modality as justification does not seem to be supported by teachers, students and counselors- less than 10 % (except for the counselors). Such a response suggests the expectation someone else to make a decision and take responsibility for the execution of activities related to the gangs at school.</i>

Let's prevent „chimerical groups“ from acting like a gang in school and remove their malicious influence!	9%	2%	2%	behabitive modality - apology, congratulation, praise, invocation <i>Behabitive modality of the performative expression (invocation)with 'chimerical group' does not receive the necessary speech support in the three surveyed groups, It is obvious that the high and low pathetic speaking is not popular when it comes to dealing with gangs</i>
Victims of „chimerical groups“ at school as a type of criminal organization are more than one can expected but eventually everyone has limits to their patience	36%	28%	53%	commissive modality - a promise, threat, taking responsibility; <i>Commissive modality as a thread and taking of responsibility relates to over 50 % of the counselors, 36% of the students and 28 % of the teachers. The results show the decisiveness to counteract against gang even at linguistic level</i>
"Chimerical groups" at school are a newly emerged phenomenon linked to the criminal behavior of the adolescents who bring with them violence, aggression and suppression	8%	12%	10%	expositive modality - I answer, I prove, I admit, I illustrate, I assume <i>Expositive modality of performative utterances linked to chimerical group in the quality of assumption is also distributed evenly among the surveyed speech communities It shows that the respondents have fear or respect for gangs in schools. It also shows the impossibility to consolidate speech communities</i>

On the empirical level the study of the term „chimerical group“ in mode of use of institutional performative speech acts allows us to talk about the possibility for the participants in communication to achieve communicative success

(perlocutive effect) - students, teachers and counselors. Linguistic (speech) communities consolidate in terms of „performative utterances“, interpreting the term „chimerical group“ in all the statements but primarily in „commissive modality“ („threat“ and „responsibility“); followed by verdictive modality (evaluation, opinion), and equally in all other modalities. In this case „performative utterances“, which included the notion „chimerical group“ are part of the system of values and value order of thinking that bring not just agreement or disagreement to the communicators, but also expressed a varying degrees of readiness to act. The dominance of „commissive“ and „verdictive“, i.e. of the regulations of the school to impose „opinions“ and „evaluations“ and at the same time to prepare the necessary changes in language and speech behavior of the participants is present.

The study of linguistic communities within institutions in the context of the notion of „chimerical group“ provides the opportunity to realize social connotations of linguistic behavior in school. Gangs, however, bring a new language, hence, a new world and the exploration of this world will provide a more complete picture „of how words do things.“ Chimerical groups are not only a new educational phenomenon, but also a new language phenomenon in the public space of the school institution. Language tags are the surest way to the existing fundamentals of a phenomenon, including research, and the chance to test preparedness for action and opposing to communities united by language and its power to be „the home of the truth and being“ (Heidegger).

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