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**T. Leonenko**Doctor of Juridical Sciences, Associate Professor  
Classic Private University**THE USE OF JUVENILES' AGE PECULIARITIES BY RELIGIOUS SECTS TO INVOLVE THEM IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITY**

*The article describes the use of topical issues of religious sects age and psychological characteristics of minors for the purpose of engaging in criminal activity.*

**Key words:** minors, age, psychology, crime, involvement, criminal activity.

**I. Introduction**

The problem is youngsters already have deeply-ingrained negative attitudes, judgments, habits and behaviors in their background. As a rule, they actively reject and oppose any positive influence, raising a psychological barrier of mistrust, alienation and even hostility between themselves and educators. Eliminating the barrier means creating positive preconditions for further psychological influence. It is not only about instilling or cultivating some positive attitudes and features in a teenager or adolescent, it's also about the art of correction and rehabilitation, i. e. neutralization and elimination of previously formed negative attitudes and patterns of behavior.

**II. Problem definition**

The aim of the article is to analyze the use of psychology of minors for their involvement in criminal activities of religious sects.

**III. Results**

Unlike crises of neurotic or traumatic character, age crises belong to standard processes which are essential parts of normal progressive process of identity development (E. Erikson). Age crises might occur when a person advances from one age category to another and they result in systematic qualitative changes in terms of social interaction, activities and consciousness. The following crises are differentiated in childhood: first year crisis, three-year-olds' crises, 6–7 year-olds' crisis, adolescence crisis (10–11 year-olds). The above mentioned chronological periods are rather relative due to substantial differences in a range of individual, sociocultural and other factors. Individual specifics, duration and severity of crises may vary substantially due to individually typological characteristics, social and micro social conditions, family-related peculiarities of upbringing etc. The periods of age crises are characterized by transition processes and adopting new type of relations and attitudes, which take into consideration new opportunities, changed social situation of development, new kinds of activities and reorganization of the entire consciousness structure. Procedures of transition

to the next stage involve confronting and mastering new and often acute challenges. Negativism, stubbornness, capriciousness, tendency to initiate conflicts and other manifestations of negative attitude in behavior, characteristic of age crises, will worsen if a child's new needs in terms of communication and activity are neglected. Otherwise, these manifestations will ease off if the child is brought up properly. As for the adults, such turning points are known to be less frequent and conspicuous in their manifestation, without noticeable changes in behavior.

In terms of norms and values, which gain particular importance later into the adulthood, every stage is characterized by specific challenges and tasks. Successful completion of these tasks not only influences personal development in general but also allows for advancing to the next stage. Among others, these tasks include choosing the career, professional training, creating one's own family etc. The course of age-related development is connected with irreversible psycho-physiological changes, but there is no time correlation between closely interrelated lines of physical (physiological), psychic and social development of an individual. The uneven pace of these sides development often results in discrepancies in the degree of physical, psychological or social maturity of an individual, calling forth such phenomena as acceleration, psychophysical and personality infantilism, mental retardation and others. Chronological boundaries of psychological age characteristics significantly vary depending on the sociocultural, economic and other factors.

There can be no fixed or stated age boundaries for age-specific development, as these boundaries are flexible, fickle, depend on historical situation and vary in different socio-economic conditions of identity development.

Contemporary scientists identify two main stages of identity development. The first one – early adolescence – is the stage of human development in the period from 11–12 to 15 years. The second one – adolescence – takes place between 15–18 years. Early ado-

Adolescence is the time of intense identity formation, its enrichment by way of absorbing moral and intellectual values. It is the period of profound changes in mental activity, of body changes and physiological advancement. This is the age of the first truly self-administered, independent actions, first responsible decision making, and first serious friendship. But it is also the age when adolescents neglect social norms and demands, disrespect their elders, express cynicism, introversion, stubbornness. Early adolescence is probably the most controversial and dynamic period in human life.

Adolescence is defined as a transitional stage. It is not surprising, as an adolescent is a person who is in a state of transition from childhood to adulthood, from immaturity to maturity. Therefore, it is associated with contradictory behavior and instability, abrupt fluctuations from naive childish reactions to seriously motivated actions. As a rule, adolescents do not have any consistent and resolute course of behavior. Therefore they are particularly vulnerable to various kinds of influence, including those that lead off the right path and sometimes are the cause of serious misdoings and deviations from social norms of moral, resulting in breakdowns, moral disruption and decay of personality.

The transition from childhood to adolescence is associated with the serious reappraisal of values. This is reflected in the fact that thoughts and attitudes inherent in childhood are replaced by more mature, independent (or claiming to be independent) judgments, new estimates of the reality. The urge towards self-assertion and independent activity is growing, too. At the same time there are often discrepancies (differences) between the previous and newly acquired judgments and estimates. This produces duality and contradictions in assertions and conclusions, pronounced attempt to dissociate themselves from everything childish, disrespect of age authority, aversion to ungrounded restrictions and so on.

Inner conflicts, acute sensitivity and vulnerability of adolescents, superficiality of their identity and self-esteem, lack of sustained interests determine adolescents' particular exposure to certain conditions. They have not yet developed the ability to assess information critically and selectively. As a result, different, sometimes even accidental circumstances may impose a deep imprint on the inner world and behavior of adolescents.

The desire for self-assertion is inextricably linked with significant changes in different spheres of adolescents' life and activities, in their psychology, their physical development. In this period young people begin to systematically master the fundamentals of science, which, in turn, requires changes in the usual

patterns of working and thinking, reconsideration of attention and new techniques of memorizing. Adolescents form new feature – they get independent. Awareness of their own spiritual and physical strength naturally causes assertion of self-esteem. This feeling is based on the fact that young people are able to set and to solve some practical tasks.

Early adolescence is the period when all spiritual and physical strength of the individual flourish. It is the time when young people achieve the degree of mental, ideological and social maturity, which makes them capable of self-reliant work and social life and activity.

The new conditions of life and work significantly change the position of adolescents among other people around them, leading to an increase in the degree of their independence and activity. There are also significant changes in the spiritual life of young people. Psychologists, in particular, note the further development of mental activity. The way of thinking in late adolescence age differs from the way of thinking in early adolescence by higher level of generalization, capability of deeper understanding of the laws of the world around them.

Acceptance of rules and norms of behavior is inextricably linked with the process of young people gaining moral consciousness. It is in adolescence that people advance from knowing basic moral concepts to in-depth recognition of the most complicated moral categories – obligation, honor, social welfare, religion etc. During this period people begin to understand not only the subtlest shades of many moral concepts, but most importantly – the moral palette of different actions of other people as well as their own actions. Hence we observe the high-level moral sensitivity of adolescents, their assessment and self-assessment. Sometimes these qualities become distorted. Thus, adolescents are morally exacting and over demanding, which often manifests itself in exaggeration of any cases of injustice, dishonesty, unscrupulousness. Strict assessment is expressed in straightforwardness, unconditional condemnation in categorical and sometimes offensive to others judgments and conclusions.

The formation of moral consciousness is accompanied with the formation of religious belief, which has a great influence on the motivation of adolescents. These motifs are increasingly filtered through moral evaluations, increasingly "filled with" specific and important for the individual life contents. This is directly reflected in the choice of course of action in a variety of situations, displayed in courses of actions, in desire to enforce the decision made. Thus, adolescence is the relevant risk zone, when a juvenile is more than ever helpless and vulnerable to criminal suggestion as to the benefits of a particular religion.

#### IV. Conclusions

Examples of such organizations, built on control over their members' behavior, include Unification Church, Church of Scientology, Cult of Satanism, Transcendental Meditation movement, White Brotherhood.

The prohibition aroused great response. Some members of society perceived this provision as legal restrictions on the activities of those denominations that work with children and adolescents classified as disadvantaged groups (alcoholics, drug addicts, orphans etc.). The question arises: who has the right to grant permission to involve these children in the work of religious organizations? In any case, the very fact that the government has paid attention to this problem is a step forward in the protection of juveniles' rights.

In some cases, religious juvenile delinquency is a specific, sad indicator of adverse conditions of adolescents' life and upbringing in the family.

It is impossible to overestimate the damage caused to fight against crime by adult instigators and organizers of juvenile crimes. But we can not deny that they often involve in criminal activity the juveniles already predisposed and to some extent prepared for this. In addition, the fact that a crime has been committed by a juvenile indicates that there is a high social danger of religious groups' activities which inspire and provoke juveniles to commit crimes.

As a rule, juveniles join criminal groups (sects) voluntarily, without external coercion. Indeed, there are some aspects of criminal group psychology which are undoubtedly attractive to juveniles: pseudo-romantic, pseudo-heroism, unconventional and often cynical ideas and judgments on various phenomena, straightforward judgment on the aspects of life considered to be social taboos, etc. Being exposed to the influence of this psychology, juveniles' views and opinions about other people, society in general, personal or social goals and objectives start transforming considerably. Ultimately, the negative impact of the group logically results either in occasional crimes or in systematic socially dangerous group actions.

Thus, there is a whole range of factors that determine the formation of a juvenile delinquent. Some of them act as direct causes of criminal actions – they determine the process of forming socially harmful impulses and infringements, as well as specifics of their implementation in socially dangerous actions and deeds. Other factors act as conditions that determine retention of these causes and facilitate their manifestation in juvenile delinquency. They tend to enhance the influence of the causes of delinquency and are in fact key factors that allow for realization of the causes of socially dangerous actions on the part of adolescents.

Juvenile offender is a fickle and dynamic personality. Even quick study reveals odd inconsistency of judgments, opinions and motives, erratic behavior, illogical deeds and actions, etc. Delinquent's psychology represents a unity of incompatibility: duality and contradictoriness of personality basis, attitude to society, to the people around, to the norms and rules of conduct. It goes without saying, that psychic inconsistency is inherent to adolescent psychology in general and even to young age psychology to some extent. Moreover, in this age the identity formation can occur only through overcoming internal conflicts based on their unity and struggle.

Thus, the propensity of a juvenile to commit crime on religious grounds in some cases is not the juvenile's fault but the responsibility of the environment, including parents, teachers, carers, nongovernmental organizations and the state in general. Negligence, lack of interest in the child, ignoring his/her life, interests and problems – these can all become forces pushing a young person to committing a crime. Religious organizations involved in criminal activities always admit these "problem" children and use them with criminal purposes.

When juveniles feel that they matter, listened to, directed and treated as individuals, they are ready to do whatever it takes to get what they think is care and family love. Juveniles' identity is pliable, it can be easily affected and used to reach one's own goals.

It is possible to reform juveniles who are members of totalitarian sects and have not committed a crime (though were ready to do it). Responsibility for this rests on those who once "pushed" that child towards being a member of the sect. Only adults' legal awareness, their professionalism can help prevent a juvenile from committing a crime. Correctional work should begin before a juvenile becomes a criminal and can be convicted.

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### **Леоненко Т. Є. Вікові особливості неповнолітніх та їх використання релігійними сектами в злочинній діяльності**

*У статті розкрито проблеми використання релігійними сектами вікових та психологічних особливостей неповнолітніх з метою їх залучення до релігійних сект для злочинної діяльності. В дослідженні йдеться про те, що вік – категорія, яка позначає тимчасові характеристики індивідуального розвитку. На відміну від хронологічного віку, який виражає тривалість існування індивіда з моменту його народження, поняття психологічного віку позначає певний, якісно своєрідний щабель онтогенетичного розвитку, який зумовлено закономірностями формування організму, умовами життя, навчання й виховання.*

*Процес переходу від одного вікового щабля до іншого передбачає глибоке перетворення всіх названих структурних компонентів віку та може супроводжуватися більш-менш вираженими конфліктами та протиріччями (віковими кризами). Вікові кризи – особливі, відносно не тривалі за часом (до року) періоди онтогенезу, які характеризують різкими психологічними змінами. На відміну від криз невротичного або травматичного характеру, вікові кризи належать до нормативних процесів, необхідних для нормального, поступового процесу особистісного розвитку (Е. Еріксон). Вікові кризи можуть виникати при переході людини від однієї вікової категорії до іншої та пов'язані із системними якісними змінами у сфері її соціальних відносин, діяльності та свідомості.*

*Поняття вікових особливостей, вікових меж не має абсолютного значення – вікові межі рухливі, мінливі, мають конкретно-історичний характер і не збігаються в різних соціально-економічних умовах розвитку особистості. Сучасна наука виділяє два основних етапи форму-*

вання особистості: підлітковий вік – період розвитку дітей від 11–12 до 15 років; ранній (або молодший) юнацький вік – приблизно від 15 до 18 років.

Використання психологічних вікових особливостей пов'язане із знанням складностей та протиріч особистості, що формується, особливостей взаємодії її з навколишнім середовищем. Зазвичай найбільш характерними особливостями цього процесу є: емоційно виражене прагнення пізнати навколишню дійсність, висока активність особистості, поява власних оцінок тих або інших подій та фактів. Ці риси часто вступають у протиріччя з малим життєвим досвідом, з відсутністю вміння переборювати невдачі, з нестійкістю й поверхневістю першого враження. Результатом цього є надмірна різноманітність пізнавальних інтересів, швидка зміна спрямованості уваги й зовнішньої орієнтації, висока "рухливість" оцінок і самооцінки.

Внутрішні протиріччя, гостра сприйнятливості і вразливість підлітка, поверхневості самосвідомості та самооцінки, відсутність стійких інтересів визначають його особливу схильність до впливу певних чинників.

**Ключові слова:** злочин, вік, психологія, неповнолітній, злочинна поведінка.

#### **Леоненко Т. Возрастные особенности несовершеннолетних и их использование религиозными сектами в преступной деятельности**

В статье рассматриваются проблемы использования религиозными сектами возрастных и психологических особенностей несовершеннолетних с целью их вовлечения в религиозные секты для осуществления преступной деятельности.

**Ключевые слова:** преступление, возраст, психология, несовершеннолетний, преступное поведение.