

**EdCW 2020****International Scientific and Practical Conference Education in a Changing World: Global Challenges and National Priorities****THE DEFAULT CONSPIRACY IN SLASHER: SOCIALIZING SPELL OF YOUTH FOR CONSUMER WELL-BEING**

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**Abstract**

Hollywood horror film is a large-scale practice of visualizing youth conflicts with school teachers, their own parents, and government officials. This genre of American cinema extremely productively reflects on the crisis of educational disciplinarity associated with the insoluble contradictions between the demands of schoolchildren, the educational and state systems. The student and his parents, being the customers of educational services, demand from the school socialization system a complete rejection of violence. While educational technologies have traditionally been formed precisely as compulsory methods and techniques. In order to prevent the conflict from aggravating, there is a kind of “social contract” between all participants in the educational process, in which, in exchange for the student's demonstratively loyal and conformist behavior, the school's mutual refusal to interfere in his personal affairs follows. This situation provokes the development of sensory hedonism and consumer perversions in schoolchildren, which turns into complete apoliticality, and in some places also asociality of young people who refuse to accept any socially significant projects. The logical consequence of the development of such a model of disciplinarity is its deformation towards the dominance of the liberal doctrine of the civilization of leisure, in which horror and fear are the only natural bonds for the formation and subsequent retention of simulative social priorities and, as a consequence, the formation of an imitation model of social interaction.

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## 1. Introduction

The Hollywood youth slasher, whose composition is traditionally based on “a shocking dissection of images of nature, man and society” (Malenko & Nekita, 2018, p. 42), rapidly burst into the space of 20th century mass culture with deep artistic images and shocking reflection on the place and the role of the modern student in American society. It should be noted that it turned out to be very sensitive to the edifying recommendations of psychoanalysts to provide maximum freedom to the child, especially in the early periods of his socialization. Freud (2013) and his students, voicing such recipes, especially warned society against excessive disciplinary care of children and youth, which always leaves a significant negative imprint on their entire subsequent professional and personal life. But since the Americans always and in everything went only their own way, they took even these advice in a very special way.

Since the 20th century for American society was marked by an unprecedented flourishing of consumer ideology and practice, then freedom was interpreted by them completely in the same consumerist spirit. Therefore, freedom for an American boy or girl is just a narrow corridor of thoughts and actions associated with the easy commercial and servile satisfaction of basic bodily needs. In this regard, the quality of the American family and educational institutions is primarily determined by their ability to “manifest cultural fears and hopes” (Cronin, 2019, p. 27) and create optimal conditions for the formation of a future loyal consumer in accordance with the demands of the authorities. The consumer format of socialization tragically distorts ideas about the social and cultural role of a young person, contributes to the formation of his narcissistic attitudes, vulgar egoism, which finally “deprives young people of the rights and skills for realizing their own interests, gives rise to continuous and brutal school wars for the right to possess inviolable personal and generational space” (Malenko et al., 2020, p. 422). Therefore, all institutional pressure on children and youth is associated with the formation of a consumer worldview, which naturally turns into an unformed scientific picture of the world, ideas about moral regulations in social communication, as well as the absence of an existential need for meaningful, cultural communication with other people and oneself.

Such emptiness of the child's inner world, unconsciously created by adults, forms in adolescents and young people a persistent, echeloned anxiety about the possible inadequacy of their way of life. The emergence of such fears and complexes “is often preceded by surprise caused by the realization of a real and burdensome danger, which, in our opinion, threatens our survival” (Roas, 2018, p. 9). At the same time, fear and the continuously aggravated sense of guilt finally neurotize their life at the biotic level, which ultimately turns out to be a terrible postmodern reincarnation of the ontological sinfulness of carnal desires, and indeed everything connected with their own body. That is why the Hollywood youth slasher builds all its nightmarish stories around the terrible personal and social consequences of sensory hedonism and sexual perversion. And while in traditional society such behavior models were unambiguously condemned, in the space of consumer culture they are not only approved, but in some places even heroized.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The article examines the practice of an American slasher in visualizing conflicts between young people and teachers, parents and government officials, which gives rise to a new format of a “social contract” between all participants in the educational process.

## **3. Research Questions**

The article will consider three main positions that reveal the problem field of the topic:

- 3.1. the actual problems of transformation of the classical educational model in the direction of leveling the knowledge component, which are actively replaced by biological communication scenarios within disciplinary educational communities, have been studied;
- 3.2. the ethological foundations of disciplinary educational communication have been analyzed;
- 3.3. the functional roles of the participants in the modern version of the "social contract" in the educational spaces of the United States on the example of the tradition of the Hollywood youth slasher have been revealed.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the article is to analyze the growing contradiction between the classical model of education and the political and ideological requirements of the modern state for the formation of loyal and conformist behavior of young people.

## **5. Research Methods**

Educational spaces have traditionally been classified as repressive institutions of civilization along with medical and penitentiary institutions. Such an innovative methodology, proposed by Foucault (1999) in his work “Discipline and Punish”, made it possible not only to understand the logic of disciplinarity, but also to identify possible trends in its transformation. The study of the institutional disciplinarity generated by social processes requires a multifaceted scientific approach that combines hermeneutic, psychoanalytic, phenomenological and structuralist methods.

At the same time, in the context of the artistic experience of the American slasher, the category of “school disciplinarity” acquires a special meaning, since it reveals the entire drama of the student's inner experiences against the background of the neutral reaction of the adults and peers around him. The sought-after result of school disciplinarity, which Foucault (1999) also wrote about, turns into acute internal conflicts that threaten to destroy the entire social context or destroy its individual institutional locations. Understanding this complex paradox is possible using the methodology of Jung and Foucault (2007), which allows to define disciplinarity as a result of the contradiction between the archetypal content of consciousness and the institutional forms of its socialization.

School disciplinarity in the conditions of postmodernism ceases to be an exclusively educational problem. It reflects a whole spectrum of general social tendencies that reveal the political and ideological mechanism of civilizational manipulations behind disciplinarity. We find similar neo-Marxist reasoning in Jameson (1991), who emphasizes that the system of state administration is constructed, among other things, on the basis of the political unconscious. A number of Western researchers (Cole & Bradley, 2016; Lawrence, 2016; Scull & Malik, 2019; Walker, 2016) have found that the artistic images of the American slasher allow us to understand not only the peculiarities of the interaction of modern education and culture, but also to start studying the ideology of disciplinarity of the American educational environment and its constituent entities of the “social contract” regarding the creation and generational transmission of knowledge, skills and abilities.

## 6. Findings

The typical American teenager is by no means an individual immersed in the school drill that dates back to medieval educational institutions. On the contrary, an extensive and well-funded school infrastructure openly condones the emergence of new desires in children and adolescents, most of which are satisfied almost instantly and do not require bodily conscious or even volitional efforts. Paradoxically, for American schoolchildren, their parents and teachers, the knowledge acquired by children in disciplinary educational spaces “is not in itself a value” (Dimiev, 2008, p. 67), since their traditional everyday life is a cocktail in a unique and unpredictable way of official regulations and a semi-relaxed, in fact, leisure stay in remarkably equipped school classes, gyms, clubs and hobby groups. In the absence of the intellectual development demanded by society and the authorities, schoolchildren are happy to exercise among themselves in defining and subsequently challenging places in the emerging youth group hierarchies. And this is also completely understandable, since at this stage they already have an absolute dominance of the ethological principles of social communication. In fact, the school is turning into a leading space for biological competition for the possibility of full realization of basic instincts, purposefully alternating with entertaining and recreational activities actively encouraged by parents, teachers and the authorities. It is the ethology of youth communication that becomes the main plot of the American slasher, since it is precisely this format that most corresponds to the strategic biopolitical demands of the American government, the strength of which still “continues to determine America's main bloody myth about itself” (Green, 2020, p. 43).

The ethology of adolescent and youth aggression largely explains the relatively neutral attitude of teachers and school leaders to the spiritual and intellectual achievements of schoolchildren. This attitude towards the child is the reaction of adults to the constant excitement of adolescents, which quite naturally “turns all the space available to them into a literal hell, inhabited by demons, vampires and werewolves, pursuing their vulnerable teenage victims” (Lawrence, 2016, p. 169). Such monstrous fantasies in the spirit of nightmarish images of one of the most beloved holidays in the United States – Halloween, become paradoxical symbols of carelessness, material well-being and reproduce the state's attitudes towards the formation of the next generation of the “leisure class”. Unlike bohemia, which has always been a symbol of demonstrative idleness, American youth are just beginning to taste this way of life, because its scenario of idleness is most likely of a domestic and everyday nature.

According to the version of Hollywood horror films, which are a typical “reaction to changing historical conditions” (Hantke, 2019, p. 123), school socialization is a “soft” and time-stretched technology for a person's entry into the adult world, and its playful character has, unfortunately, a very significant drawback associated with the final lack of ideas among children and young people about personal and social responsibility for their actions. Their main credo is easy and carefree leisure, against which all the evil demons of youth slashers are mercilessly fighting. This is how the informal ethology of all participants in the disciplinary educational process is gradually taking shape, which presupposes a kind of “social contract” according to which: students for twelve years “voluntarily” are in the disciplinary space and formally comply with all the necessary requirements, and in return they receive all the maximum bonuses in the form consumer infantilism and social irresponsibility; teachers carefully imitate the positive results of the educational and upbringing process, receiving in return a significant social status and high salaries from the state, encouragements from the school leadership and respect from parents; the school and district management, in the absence of complaints, qualifies the full compliance of the educational process with all regulatory documents; parents provide support to an educational institution in the event that teachers and school leaders create in them a reliable illusion of the exceptional talents and abilities of their children; at the same time, the federal authorities are ready to support and prolong such collective misconceptions, characteristic of the entire system of educational disciplinarity, if all its participants clearly demonstrate loyalty to regional and federal laws and, for another generation, collectively reproduce the state ideology and the American way of life itself. It is this format of the “social contract” that creates a universal system of corporate disciplinarity, within which all its participants are simply forced to continuously “play at efficiency” although in essence the educational and upbringing process itself does not take place here, since it is replaced only by a formal twelve-year “overexposure” of the next generation in the educational disciplinary space. It is significant that such a technology can only be effective at certain historical stages, when society is immersed in crisis processes and is not fully aware of universally valid ideals.

## **7. Conclusion**

The American horror film is particularly vividly “reflects and responds to the rise of American authoritarianism” (Goodall, 2020, p. 123) and is extremely sensitive to the problems inherent in today's disciplinary educational environments in the United States. After all, it was through the shocking visualization of destructive plots and the terrible demonstration of the perniciousness of the “empty” communication of schoolchildren, teachers and parents that this genre not only barely exposed the fundamental and insoluble contradictions that are so characteristic of the modern stage of US development, but also predicted their appearance in many ways.

On the other hand, in the absence of socially significant and unifying, positive, non-consumer ideals, it is precisely the Hollywood youth slasher that directly refers viewers to the archaic experience, in the images of artistic development of which the eternal maieutics of generations are forcibly embedded in institutional and general civilizational contexts. It is indicative that the widespread use of archaic plots, images and their inherent language in American horror films emphasizes the extremely negative assessment by their authors of both actual problems in disciplinary educational spaces and the proposed

scenarios for their solution. Youth horror stories, richly flavored with images of archaic monsters, each time emphasize the eternity of the problems facing modern civilization. And the magic of the cinematic images of evil demonstrated by them allows returning to the disciplinary educational environment the primordial emotional relations between schoolchildren and teachers that are so missing there.

At the same time, such a technique makes it possible to revise the content of disciplinary communication anew, excluding the formal elements of simulation from it, filling the process of school communication with the experience of transferring knowledge, feelings and meanings from the old generation to the new. Hollywood slasher shows society with his own eyes the real danger of just one formal communication between generations and the resulting “deep sense of ontological insecurity” (Jancovich, 2015, p. 163), which gives rise to professional incompetence and degradation of the entire system of social interaction. The consistent and shocking reincarnation of the images of archaic mythologies in the youth slasher should be recognized as an extremely successful attempt by Hollywood, at all costs to preserve the basic archetypal meanings, at least somehow filling the life of the American society, plunged into the abyss of spiritual dystrophy. Only making moral norms imperative will allow us to overcome the growing dangers of the widespread introduction of biopolitical technologies into the institutional system of social and political management.

The designated format of the social contract in educational disciplinary spaces, of course, consolidates it as a leading communicative formula and contributes to the gradual degradation of the traditional family, as an example of broadcasting naturally and socially balanced gender roles and meanings. Thus, the Hollywood youth slasher is the only film genre that voluntarily and professionally takes on the mission of social and artistic criticism of the depravity of the simulative ideology of disciplinary educational spaces in the United States.

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