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SCHOOL IDLENESS IN CONSUMER SOCIALIZATION STRATEGIES ACCORDING TO AMERICAN HORROR FILM

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Abstract

The article examines the intergenerational conflict that is central to Westernized educational spaces, which is actively visualized in the tradition of American horror films. Educational socialization forms a rigid system of stratification, which is subsequently perceived by children and young people as a natural form of social communication. Such models of socialization are based on a system of disciplinary coercion, which provokes an increase in aggression and destructiveness in educational environments. The idle consumer practices of adolescents and young people compensate for the consequences of disciplinary socialization. Realizing their own cognitive interests, the child opposes himself to the model of school socialization, automatically turns into a deviant personality, which undermines the disciplinary strategies of the school and the consumer attitudes of the entire American society. Reflection of an American horror film about this situation is reduced to demonstrating the monstrous nature of the teacher, personifying the disciplinary nature of civilization and mass culture. The terrible images of teachers testify to the acuteness and insolubility of the contradictions between generations, and the strategy of destroying opponents and the entire disciplinary environment seems to be the only way out of this crisis. This ideological substitution forces all participants in disciplinary educational spaces to produce and widely exploit simulacra in everyday and normative communication strategies, which leads to a complete disregard for the creative and cognitive potential of young people and makes it impossible to broadcast the experience of the older generation.

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Keywords: Disciplinary educational spaces, monstrous socialization, American horror films, ideology of idleness, leisure, popular culture



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1. Introduction

The search for universal mechanisms of human adaptation to the civilizational environment constituted the strategic task of more than a dozen significant social institutions, the leading positions among which are traditionally occupied by politics, pedagogy and art. The fact that various social spaces devote their efforts to creating and working out these mechanisms allows one to focus both on the various abilities of the individuals themselves, and on a wide range of contexts of their emergence and development. Taking into account such diversity is one of the leading principles of the effectiveness of social management, designed to minimize the emergence and development of destructive phenomena that can destabilize or even completely destroy social space. At the same time, the union of politics, pedagogy and art turned out to be far from accidental, since the formation of modern media culture provides unique managerial opportunities for the formation of predictable behavioral reactions of entire generations. While pedagogy traditionally relies primarily on the rational abilities of children, which are comprehensively developed within disciplinary educational spaces, politics, especially modern ones, increasingly prefers to flirt with a person, subtly exploiting his unconscious needs and desires. It was this moment that led to the persistent interest of the authorities in art, which historically was engaged in the production of specific artistic material, to a greater extent connected precisely with the manifestations of the unconscious nature of man. Modern artistic images are increasingly proving to be much more vivid, convincing and effective arguments than the abstract rational schemes that are commonly used in pedagogy. And visual culture, thanks to new technological capabilities, is beginning to acquire unprecedented popularity and can fully compete with politics in terms of the degree of influence it exerts on the minds and moods of the masses. The main paradox of the post-industrial era can be considered the fact that it is the marginal and destructive images that always surpass the popularity of the plots of historical films, melodramas and comedy films. Therefore, it is not surprising that an American horror film, constantly telling about the difficulties and tragedies on the path of school socialization, becomes an example of extremely successful scenarios for visualizing systemic problems in disciplinary educational spaces, which equally relate to both pedagogy itself and leading political and administrative structures. This situation gives rise to a stable symbiosis of the three above-mentioned institutions, the interaction of which makes it possible to create and promote in the space of stereotypes of the younger generation a stable illusion about its future civic and professional viability, as well as social relevance.

2. Problem Statement

Traditional educational socialization has always relied on a system of disciplinary coercion, which gave rise to a natural response aggression from adolescents and young people. In order to minimize such destructive phenomena, the modern American educational system everywhere borrows and implements idle consumer practices that allow us to overcome disciplinary pressure and form a loyal consumer citizen. The conflicts arising in the course of the implementation of this contradictory and complex task become the main content of the Hollywood youth horror film.

3. Research Questions

The article will address the following problems:

- 3.1. determining the reasons for the transformation of the modern school into the epicenter of the social processes of the consumer society;
- 3.2. identification of the degree of influence of modifications of the economic structure on the nature of changes in educational processes;
- 3.3. analysis of the reasons for the transformation of education from a system of acquiring knowledge, skills and abilities into a service sector;
- 3.4. establishing the reasons for the transformation of disciplinary educational spaces into leisure institutions of the consumer society;
- 3.5. analysis of Hollywood scenarios for the opposition of archetypal heroics to the practice of leisure socialization of youth.

4. Purpose of the Study

The article is devoted to the consideration of the influence of idle consumer practices of adolescents and youth, actively introduced into the system of school socialization, on the change in the disciplinary nature of educational communication.

5. Research Methods

The study of Hollywood horror films is one of the promising directions in Western humanities. These studies are represented by various interdisciplinary scientific traditions that have demonstrated the new content of postcolonial research. Among the most philosophical approaches to studying this phenomenon are the texts of Carroll (2018). It was he who, relying on a semiotic analysis of this genre of cinematography, sought to identify symbolic analogues of the socio-cultural contexts of the postmodern era, contained in film works. In addition, the American horror film initially possessed not only purely aesthetic functions, but also carried very significant socializing meanings, which were continuously attributed to it by popular culture. Thanks to the critical assessment of the representatives of the Frankfurt School and neo-Marxism, a horror film today qualifies as a special ideological form of socialization of the younger generation. Jameson (1991) naturally pointed to the parallels in the study of American horror films with the functioning of the concept of "political unconscious" proposed by him. Thus, Jameson qualified the cultural codes of Hollywood horror cinema as a strategy of direct ideological influence on the mass audience.

It is significant that the tradition of viewing horror films as a unique cultural text is also continued by Anglo-American "Cultural Studies", since such an interpretation allows us to cover the widest possible spectrum of manifestations of this genre (Fortuna, 2018; Power, 2016). The methodology for analyzing the ideological meanings of the visual socialization of young people also requires detailed psychological

and pedagogical study. Therefore, Herskovits (1955), who proposed the term inculcation, develops a methodology for analyzing cultural phenomena that are presented in conscious and unconscious forms. It is cinematography and horror films that make it possible to broadcast general cultural attitudes that are assimilated by young people uncritically, and therefore turn out to be the most productive just at this age. In this vein, the methodological premises of Veblen (2018) are extremely useful, who, studying the American reality of the 19th century, in his book “The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions”, published in 1899, determined that socialization strategies are determined formed by the upper classes by the fashion for careless, idle and consumer pastime. Therefore, in the context of the study of the disciplinary practices of the American education system, Veblen's studies are of exceptional methodological value. The socializing potential of cinema was at one time highly appreciated in pedagogy, and therefore gave rise to a separate direction called “cinema pedagogy”. In this regard, Walker (2016), Cole and Bradley (2016) reasonably believe that the study of cinema and horror films is of exceptional value due to the fact that they form a critical attitude of young people to the surrounding socio-cultural space and contribute to the formation of skills to distinguish between ideological and non-ideological forms of communication. In addition, Grunzke (2015) and Lawrence (2016) found that horror films, through shock therapy, actively exploit the biotic moments of communication of the younger generation.

6. Findings

The American school has always been at the forefront of the struggle for a person entering adult, civilized life, since it constantly reveals on a “small scale problems that concern humanity” (Ruiz Pérez, 2020, p. 67), and its Hollywood images each time emphasize the exceptional importance of this social institution for the formation and generational transmission of the state ideological model. Therefore, the school is traditionally at the epicenter of social processes, of course, affecting the entire society, acting as a kind of indicator that not only clearly fixes the current problems, but also outlines possible scenarios and institutional prospects for overcoming them. Postindustrial America is transforming its primordial, bourgeois-economic structure so seriously that the share of material production, which provides the foundation of national well-being, each year accounts for a smaller and smaller percentage. Against this background, it is the service sector that demonstrates stable positive dynamics, which, of course, leaves an imprint on the formation of young people's perceptions of priorities in American society. This leads to the emergence of a number of cultural industries, created to form and promote the desired power profile of leisure, into the sphere of which a significant part of the socializing load that previously fell on the school, church and other disciplinary institutions is transferred. In addition, leisure is becoming not just a service sector, but also turning into an unprecedentedly successful commercial mechanism for the formation of national wealth and the country's image in the national and international arena. According to researcher Avetisyan (2014), today “post-industrial countries are usually called those in which the service sector accounts for significantly more than half of GDP. This criterion includes, first of all, the USA (the service sector accounts for 79.4% of the US GDP), the EU countries (the service sector – 69.4% of the GDP of the EU countries) and all developed countries” (p. 3). This situation imposes serious social obligations on the American school to form a state-oriented and patriotic consumer of services. Therefore,

the use of the arsenal of American cinema, as the most demanded and profitable segment of the leisure industry, allows solving these problems as painlessly and efficiently as possible. What should be a student who is ready to become the main consumer of services in the near future? Several aspects can be distinguished here. First, it must be an individual who is a typical “example of a philistine worldview, composed of subjective opinions, stereotypes of corporate and territorial ideologemes” (Nekita & Malenko, 2020, p. 429). In this regard, he is initially focused on corporate and professional support of his life path, and therefore in his worldview, the entire social nomenclature of professions exists only to accompany his private interests. Secondly, he is purposefully relieved of “unnecessary” social initiative, which is usually expressed in the desire to maximize satisfaction of only domestic and leisure needs. Thirdly, the slightest threat of “dissatisfaction” of these needs easily turns for him into an inexhaustible source of neuroses, fears, phobias and aggression. Fourthly, representatives of such generations actually lack anti-consumer and general social, constructive, activity goals in relation to their future life. Whereas traditional pedagogy has always focused the attention of students on the complexity of the process of acquiring knowledge, skills and abilities, which was an allusion to the complexity of both production processes themselves and any socio-cultural activity as such. But under the conditions of the dictatorship of the “civilization of leisure”, the process of teaching in the American school takes on a completely different character, from now on “absolute truths crack in order to position uncertainty as the philosophical basis of postmodernism” (Diamantino Valdés, 2018, p. 341). School education is becoming just one of the types of leisure activities associated with the need for the forced coexistence of adolescents and young people in disciplinary educational spaces. Therefore, it is the American horror film that initially turns into an artistic space of the most acute collision of the above-described models of socialization and adaptation of the younger generation. It should be noted that the widespread conflicts of young people with parents, teachers and peers allow society to visually feel that gaping abyss that opens up in the absence of attitudes towards hard work in the younger generation, non-commercial forms of realization of cognitive and active interest, respect for the experience and authority of other people. Just using the examples of Hollywood horror visualization of the colossal problems in the American educational system, the rest of humanity has finally got a chance in all colours to contemplate the steady unfolding of the widespread crisis of school upbringing and education, which, as it turned out, are completely alienated from the life of children and adolescents and in no way “Cannot help solve their most pressing problems” (Lawrence, 2016, p. 169). The existing educational attitudes towards the upbringing of a versatile personality who turns out to be sensitive and at the same time tolerant of any foreign cultural manifestations, in the practice of an American horror film, illustrate the sharpest conflicts between the idle, entertaining majority and individual students who turned out to be too attentive to their cognitive interests. Youth slasher, as one of the iconic genres of Hollywood horror, unequivocally positions such students from the point of view of archetypal heroics, clearly showing how their efforts to overcome everyday Evil destroy the carefree and leisure lifestyle of the absolute majority of their peers. Paradoxically, only such rogue schoolchildren in the Hollywood horror discourse have a unique chance to become successful opponents of the monstrous Antiheroes who use horrible means to revive the “world of “dead” generations, ideas and traditions” (Malenko & Nekita, 2018, p. 44), and such a “social dimension of death [acts – auth.] as a potential source of a new order” (Martín Rodríguez, 2018, p. 408).

The Monster Antihero consistently visualizes the insoluble contradictions of childhood, which was in the nightmare captivity of adult communication schemes and strategies, and the horrible and disfigured body of the movie monster itself each time only emphasizes the depth of the fears of modern schoolchildren before future adult transformations of their own bodies and souls, and the nomenclature associated with this alienated scenarios of interaction with people around. Therefore, for such a student-Hero, the terrible Antihero, who everywhere spreads his nightmarish “influence on the viewer, invited or forced to follow the main character” (Giappone & Tanti, 2018, p. 37), is much closer in spirit than any of his peers, not to mention disciplinary-oriented educators and parents. Extreme communication between a schoolchild and an Antihero, who demonstrates “the human as supernatural” in the most defiant way (Mendelyte, 2019, p. 105), also has a deeply sacred, mythical, initiatory character. It is he who allows the child to understand and feel the value of interaction with elders as carriers of the experience of generations, which becomes an extremely important procedure for “consolidating moral lessons for the population, which has turned out to be abstracted from traditional American values” (Moreno, 2016, p. 243).

7. Conclusion

The models of educational disciplinarity that have been consistently formed since the Middle Ages are designed to sublimate the institutionally surplus energy of youth at any cost. However, in the conditions of the dominance of the values and attitudes of the “consumer society”, they inevitably reduce it to idle forms of ideologically neutral and politically safe within and intergenerational communication. The social purpose of such practices is reduced to the creation of a predictable and controlled institutional environment, which is aimed at the propaedeutics of youth moods and actions that contradict the leading political-ideological, socio-communicative and educational trends. Therefore, the school in the United States is at the forefront of the implementation of the ideology of the “American Dream” domestically, as well as the strategy of “Pax Americana” around the world. The creation and promotion on a nationwide scale of a space of carefree and entertaining everyday life for young people makes it possible to safely and profitably channel their natural energy into a profitable, neutral and politically correct channel. The American horror film constantly emphasizes the fundamental nature of mental and civilizational contradictions, which once arose in the process of school socialization, later only reincarnated from film to film, each time reviving the horror “for future generations of viewers” (Power, 2016), which “bursts into our everyday life making it impossible to get out of this experience unscathed” (De León Ramírez, 2018, p. 230). Nevertheless, the ideological value of this cinematic genre, which explicitly condemns “authoritarianism through its villains” (Goodall, 2020, p. 123), lies in the persistent desire to visualize the deep contradictions between the individual creative impulses of each the student and the averaged, impersonal functionality of the entire system of disciplinary civilizational communication. Thus, the American school and Hollywood horrible cinematography, by their joint efforts, fulfill the ideological order of the authorities, they are carefully working on the formation of a set of basic conditioned reflexes that guarantee an expanded reproduction of the leisure and consumer model of patriotic consciousness and loyal behavior, which in relation to the individual are collectively designed to “prevent his active social activity, development consciousness and feelings other than mistrust, fear and hatred” (Malenko & Nekita, 2020, p. 76).

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