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Psychology of Child Safety within Modern Media Stream

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Abstract

The article steps in to investigate the impact media production makes on children of different age. Both objective and subjective causes are considered for emergence of potentially adverse content in media stream. We regard certain prerequisites that may lead a child to mould a world picture into the shape of dangerous habitat. We analyze potential perils that may jeopardize physical, psychological, moral and ethical mental health of a child. We examine the mechanisms of pressure animated cartoon films bring on a child.

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1. Preface.

Dramatic evolution of technological constituents of mass media suggests further opportunities for human interaction and eventually triggers new demands for communication made by an individual as well as society. A human since early childhood has potential access to all cultural and scientific achievements, all kinds of entertainment including deviant forms in catering for one's tastes and desires. Modern system of information storage and broadcasting tends to ignore most cultural taboos of peoples around the whole world.

The very logic of modern cultural torrent creates a template of mentality, which feels a yearning for infinite space, actualization of will to power, world and nature domination (values of the 'Faustian man' [1] as opposed to the 'Apollonian man' of the ancient Greek civilization). Development of technics and engineering art forms, come as a triumph over nature and the world of sacral space [2],[3]. Such innovations as post service, photography, radio, television and the Internet helps shape spiritual and psychological ingredients of existence, modify and intensify human interaction, and change man and space relation. That is, the logic of technical

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development follows the way of permeation and modeling of collective and individual unconscious. As a consequence, the state of things with informational psychological safety of children requires a 'swift trial'.

2. Body

Professional work of a journalist or a news program editor attracts closer attention to critical points in vital social activity, which we call an event, news, or incident. Each of these involves a deed of a man, or a group of individuals, or collision of interests which brings forth antagonism or a conflict. A journalist should closely acquaint oneself with the event within short time limits, create a verbal or audio-visual code for it, and transmit the image via technical means to a wide audience in a comprehensible linguistic form. At that the journalist is free to maintain a personal civil view, and the freedom of information makes him free as the subject of creation. However, industrialization of culture promotes a conversion of the social institute of mass media into a sphere of effective economical activity, which makes the ambitious journalist or editor bring in the new circumstances of marketing of 'creative work', or celebrity image and responsive audience into the time sell, and fix the price with regard to the rating data (audience share) of a particular program.

There comes a clash of interests of media holders and a journalist mission to design cultural values of different social strata and thus to encourage a social dialogue. The ultimate social pursuit of the journalist is to meet public demands for information, to satisfy the need of social integration, and to help shape the national, political and ethno-cultural identity. But commercial interests of media holders lie within the logic of 'informational capitalism', which represents the fixed order in its disproportion. They take interest in devising global informational trends abusing human urge to entertainment and structuring of leisure time.

The news content abounds in violence reports - terrorist offence, burglaries, brawls and murders, catastrophes, hijacking, assaults, armed conflicts, political confrontation and what not. The idea that good news is not news underpins the whole concept of present day news-breaking, only "a shock of large or smaller scale, intruding the life routine of a country (or in the international scale) is worth reporting. It is generally believed to be much more emotionally effective in stimulating the audience and holding public attention." [4]. Hence, the rating of the program goes high.^b

At the same time there is a complete negligence for statistical data that would provide the percentage of such accidents a) in frequency for a certain period for a certain country; b) in their correlation with welcome news; c) in comparison with previous historical data, ect. All this moulds the idea of today's world as a drastically dangerous place with constant menace to every soul living in it. But "a news event is actually an unexpected change. It is something that happens abruptly, specifically, notably and in a short period of time." [4]. At that, the change might well be for the better! (Thus in the Soviet Russia mass media would follow the contrary news-breaking concept: they would start with and emphasize encouraging events, achievements and breaks-through in national economy, or come up with information on social safety net and so on; while drawbacks and misfortunes were presented as "single, non typical, of rare occurrence". This was, of course, another exaggeration, all the same leading to shift the real balance between tragic and soothing events in the world. However, it had no adverse effect upon the audience.)

Safety is one of the basic needs of a human being [6]. Perception of the world as a safe vs dangerous place is being formed in the early childhood [7], it later tells in one's behaviour, interaction, motivation, lifestyle, and emotional expectations for the future. The impact of aggressive mass media on child mentality leads to form the following attitudes: "the evil prevails over the good", "one has to be on his guard", "nobody will protect you but yourself", and the like. It all brings anxiety, fear, and mental strain, which, in its turn, may lead (and actually leads) to deviant behaviour (suicide, wanton aggression - as was recently the case at school № 263 in Moscow).

There are several levels traditionally accepted for safety/unsafety: physical (a menace to life and health); social (recognition/casting off in a community, a social standing, a birth rank, which nowadays adds in a fear to be or

^b The concept of news-breaking goes back to William Randolph Hearst (USA) who is credited with the creation of yellow journalism. He was the first to introduce the recipe for success: the front page should exhibit all kinds of sensations, exposures, human-interest stories, catastrophe and dramatic crime reports amply and realistically illustrated - to better meet mass appeal and achieve higher ratings [5].

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