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Children's Television as a Medium for Social Orientation? – An Approach in the Perspective of Children's Use of Television

Abstract

The development of individualism, distinction and pluralism has not simply slipped by the every-day life of children and youth. Today they are moreover understood as humans, who take an active role in their social life.

On the threshold from being a child to becoming an adolescent, children find themselves in a state of radical change, during this process they look out for possibilities of orientation.

Accordingly questions of orientation are no longer mainly/principally asked within a personal environment, but increasingly outwards; for example towards the media. Television is still today the main form of media and presents an attractive source of orientation from which the youth today summon up their symbolic materials for their structuring of life. Adults to whom the children relate most closely and educationalists have their own opinion of what is important regarding the social orientation of the children. However which subjects of social orientation interest today's youth? This question follows the existing work related to the background of the living situation. Which programmes are they viewing and which subjects of social orientation are in their favourites?

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Keywords

Social orientation, integration, lifestyle, television use, children's television programmes, medial reality, identity, media education

"In the post-traditional order of modernity, and against the backdrop of new forms of mediated experience, self-identity becomes a reflexive organised endeavour. The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems. In modern social life, the notion of lifestyle takes on a particular significance. The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options. Of course, there are standardising influences too – most notably, in the form of commodification, since capitalistic production and distribution form core components of modernity institutions. Yet because of the "openness" of social life today, the pluralisation of contexts of action and the diversity of "authorities", lifestyle choices is increasingly important in the constitution of self-identity and

daily activity. Reflexively organised life-planning, which normally presumes consideration of risks as filtered through contact with expert knowledge, becomes a central feature of the structuring of self-identity (Giddens 1991, 5)."

1. Social orientation and today's children

Since the beginning of the 19th century, a categorical change has been taking place between human beings and society. In observing this change, one speaks of "highly mobile" western societies. This implies the process of industrialisation and the urbanisation, migration, population increase, and rise of education (Bildungsexpansion) and mass-communication.

The result of this development is a principal increase in possible lifestyles, the experiences they entail, and ways of dealing with them. This increase manifests itself as a social structure that distinguishes itself through a coexistence of different values and value fragments.

In the context of a post-traditional order, the self becomes a reflexive project. Transitions in individual lives have always demanded psychological reorganisation; however, in a modern setting, the situation changes. The altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change. It could be said that modernity breaks down the protective framework of the small community and tradition and replaces it with much larger, impersonal organisations. Thus, the individual feels alone in a world lacking in a sense of security and forms of psychological support, which are provided by more traditional settings.

The innovations bring about an increase in individual freedom and self-determination, but also carry a decrease in personal security with them. This happens because each additional choice is accompanied by an additional restraint. As the importance of social traditions declines, the "I" occupies a centre stage in decision making. Schulze (2000) states that before post modern times the individual adapted his own life perspectives to his surroundings and her or his social situation. Today each individual has to determine his own goals and adapts the world, the surroundings or the situation to his personal goals and desires. The situation is to be arranged in a manner that permits self-realization. Thus, the responsibility for life, especially a successful and satisfying one, lies with the individual. Some may cope with these life circumstances, others feel lost and look for orientation or "lifestyle examples" in their surroundings or in the media.

What does this mean for children?

The described social change has brought a shift from extended families to nuclear families and in the past decades increasingly to non-traditional family structures of various kinds (Buckingham 2003, 21; Hurrelmann, Bründel 2003). Due to the wish of self-realization and often for reason of the economic situation at home both parents have to work and spend less time with their children. Instead, children spend more time in "organized leisure", meaning activities such as sports, music, language, computer courses and many others. The places, where these take place are far from their home and neighbourhood so that their parents need to take them there. Additionally, they are also less independently mobile because the neighbourhood does not offer attractive places to be outside. Parents often play the role of organizers or time managers for their children, having less time and energy for an intimate talk. In Germany¹, children around the age of ten complain to have difficulties to talk with their parents. They feel overtaxed by their parent's expectations and are afraid of talking about their problems.

Due to the decline of social traditions and ethic standards, as well as the decrease of importance of authorities such as parents or teachers, children are looking for different models to find orientation for their social and every day life. As media, especially television, are very present in our lives today, children use these more often to find the answer to

¹ The study "Kinderwelten 2000, Medienforschung Super RTL" presents the results of interviewed children on their leisure and their every-day life with their parents. See page 45 for more results.

questions concerning orientation. Although this may also happen in a very subtle way, for example, as they watch their "stars" on the screen and see how they live and behave.

Social orientation in a childhood surrounded by media

In this context, television programmes that may promote social orientation are those that help children to position themselves in society and to understand and reflect the different developments of society. Thus, understanding society's fragmentation and differing lifestyles and enabling children to develop their identity. This also comprises orientation for ways of behaving, such as social behaviour and examples for successful communication.

2. The relevance of medial realities: Television as a market for identity

In the demarcation of archaic lifestyles, the significance of medial influence becomes particularly clear: to experience something particular, one had to be at the right place at the right time. With the introduction of television, these characteristics have experienced a fundamental change. For example, through the use of television, the viewer has access to experiences, yet it still maintains his arbitrary distance. Television can provide worldviews and certain programmes which in no way correspond to one another. Instead, they represent the plethora of dominant lifestyles within our pluralistic society.

In this way, ideas of manliness, femininity, childhood, leisure activities, taste and lifestyle, which are there to assist children in acquiring worldly traditions and becoming citizens, become confused. Thus, the familiar neighbourly and regional traditions, the orientations for worldviews, lose their self-evidence. Moral standards are however present in each viewer's interpretation of the media he is presented with. Accordingly, the wide range of moral concepts is not simply consumed. Instead, these moral "suggestions" are acquired in a rather communicative fashion and are processed selectively. As a result, media, especially television contribute to society's view of reality. A continuous update of society's view of itself and its cognitive horizons are a part of this.

This is how Mikos (1994, 2003) presents the view that television is a component of society's symbolic order, because communication is a symbolic process that influences members of a society. It also creates and changes the viewer's idea of reality. In this context, Schulze suggests that through the presentation of society in the media social structures and intersubjectively shared interpretations are formed (Schulze 2000, 77). With its programming, television offers the viewer a large variety of content and moral suggestions. In this connection, the concentration lies in presenting scenarios. In turn, these convey a contrived, "media reality" made possible by technology. This situation, however, presents consequences for the viewer.

Television has become a normal part of everyday life for the majority of parents and children of today. As a result, it plays a role in the socialization of the child and thus influences the development of his personality and interpretation of his surroundings. This relationship is expressed by the reciprocal relationship between the individual and society, in which the individual is affected by his social conditions, however ultimately retains the ability to independently accept, interpret, process, and categorize each stimulant. Just as generation after generation of parents play a role in raising their children, television plays a role in the socialization – now shaped by mass-communication – of generation after generation.

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3. Programme analysis from the children's perspective

This research project² deals with television programmes as media text (analysis with a qualitative approach = Analyse mit qualitativem Ausgangspunkt), as well as user-preferences (analysis with quantitative approach = Analyse mit quantitativem Ausgangspunkt) as indicators for possible issues in the interpretation of surroundings. The socialization function of television is revealed in the subjective appropriation of its programming through children, who are also subjectively responsible for creating the appropriate content. As being a programme analysis, it is only possible to discuss the programme, its content and representation. Conclusions on how these programmes might affect children's lives cannot be drawn with this method.

The analysis tries to reveal the different facets of programmes and kinds of social orientation, which might support children to determine their own identity and their place in society. This is the primary focus of this work.³ To be able to get a more precise idea of social orientation through television, the first step was to find programmes in children's television with a focus on social orientation. Where do children find opportunities, in programmes made explicitly for them, to digest their experiences and opinions regarding current societal and cultural developments?

The second and more important step was the analysis and discussion of the children's "hit-list", the 20 favourite television programmes to take the children's perspective into consideration. The discussion of these could reveal existing differences in supply and demand. An interesting aspect would be, if the programmes offered in children's television appear on the hit list, and if not, to extract the different facets of social orientation of their favourite programmes. These two approaches are just a part of the project.⁴

3.1 Children's television and its offer in respect to social orientation

The first approach to discuss the previous question of how television may support children in finding their place in society and determine their identity is to look for programmes offered in children's television as this offers programmes especially designed for them. The main areas of concentration to filter these programmes from the total of 500 hours of television material from each annual sample are as follows:

- Programmes referring to society

Where do children find programmes that aid them in understanding the current development of the society and culture, as a means of enabling them to process and classify their worldview and opinions?

- Programmes referring to integration and/or different cultures

The issue of integration and xenophobia appears more and more often in the media, taking on various forms. But, how does this issue assert itself in children's programme? Do children find examples in these programmes that show the ethnical differentiation within

² The focus on social orientation is a section of the research project: "Jährliche Bestandsaufnahme zum Kinderfernsehen – qualitative und quantitative Fernsehprogrammanalyse in der Sicht der Kinder" developed at the University of Kassel. See www.kinderfernsehforschung.de for more details.

³ The whole project is described in Claudia Raabe: Soziale Orientierung durch Fernsehen? Eine Annäherung aus der Perspektive kindlicher Fernsehnutzung. Kassel 2007.

The data base comprises the relevant TV-channels of the years 2000-2003. The samples were recorded each year considering three days of a week (one working day and the weekend) and including the viewing figures, as well as the encoding of the television material.

⁴ The project also considers the analysis of so called "children's use areas" („Kindernutzungsflächen“). These areas of reception can show what kind of programmes children see, when they spend a certain amount of time watching television. Children usually do not watch programmes from the first to the last minute. Due to their own needs and television routines (Sehgewohnheiten) they tend to stay with one programme or to switch to another. These activities form areas of reception which contain elements or fragments of programmes. As these "Kindernutzungsflächen" are a result of children's reception activity (e.g. switching to another programme), they reflect children's needs and wishes of how they like their programme and thus can visualize children's programme preferences.

society and the respective ways of life? Specific areas for comparison of ethnic and cultural differences would be nationalities, as for example German traditions and customs in comparison to Turkish, or dialects and languages.

- Programmes referring to lifestyles

As a result of our diversified society, children are presented with a pile of possibilities to create a personal identity. Confrontations with various lifestyle options, social milieus, subcultures, and changing surroundings serve to make the task of “finding” one’s identity rather difficult. Are there programmes offered by television, which support children in the construction of their individual identities?

3.2 Examples of Children’s television programmes



Illustration 1:
Ki.Ka, 2000: “Logo”

Illustration 2:
Ki.Ka, 2001: “Aktiv-Boxx”

Illustration 3:
Ki.Ka, 2000: “beat per minute”

Programmes referring to society (changes in society, politics...)

If one considers children’s television from an educational perspective, one encounters programmes from public service broadcasting, such as: “Logo”, “KIK KinderInfoKiste” (Ki.Ka), specific parts of “Tigerenten-Club”, “Tabaluga-tivi” (ZDF and Ki.Ka), and “Aktiv-Boxx” (Ki.Ka). “Logo” as a children’s news programme explains current political issues to children through the use of graphs and appropriate word choice. “KIK-KinderInfoKiste” presents current issues in a simplified, however specialized, language with additional use of background information. KIK continually allows children to voice their ideas and opinions. In addition, news-happenings are presented through the perspective of a child by interviews of children on actual issues of society. Although they are only a small part of the overall programme, specific elements of the “Tigerenten Club” (ARD and Ki.Ka), such as: “Greenteam” and “Länder der Welt” should not be underestimated. In the “Greenteam” episode, children are able to watch Greenpeace workers and see reports about Greenpeace’s current environmental projects and actions. “Länder der Welt” offers children opportunities to “visit” various countries from around the world and have exciting experiences related to each country. This is done in a format that encourages discussion and further participation.

The “Aktiv-Boxx”, shown on Kinderkanal (Ki.Ka), combines current societal topics with issues children are confronted with. One of the reports, for example, presented information about the Expo mascot, his origin, and his function as a goodluck-charm for the Expo. At the end of the report, children were brought into the discussion and asked to talk about their own personal goodluck-charms. To do this, they could call in to the show, write and email, or send a fax. The moderator then spoke with those who called in and read the emails and faxes aloud.

Programmes referring to integration and/or different cultures (e.g. discussion about xenophobia)

Issues of integration and xenophobia surface constantly in the media, appearing in various forms and contexts. They also appear in children's television, but mainly referring to problematic aspects. In the area of ethnic and cultural differentiation, there are few specific examples presented in programmes made explicitly for children. A starting point, though, is the children's series "Die Pfefferkörner", a positive example because it does not focus *only* on the problematic aspects of a multicultural society. In this episode of the detective's series, a Turkish boy and his uncle are presented, not showing negative characteristics deemed "typical Turkish" (the negative stereotypes). Cem, the Turkish boy, is an intellectual child, who likes to read, and his uncle is a social worker, who helps street kids with drug problems. Due to circumstantial evidences, the school's principal suspects the boy of dealing with drugs and expels him from school, which turns out to be wrong at the end. This programme provides children with a different view of ethnic groups and the possibility to distance themselves from the normal clichés.

Individual segments from television magazines, such as "Tigerenten-Club" and Tabaluga-tivi report on foreign cultures. In this case, moderators from the "Tigerenten-Club" travel to different countries and report on their experiences and impressions. "Capoeira" in "Tabaluga-tivi" is similar in this regard. It is a segment offered by "Tabaluga-tivi", a children's magazine, presented from their perspective. In this episode, children report on a Brazilian contact sport that has elements of dance. They are filmed during their Capoeira lessons and then interviewed by Tabaluga, a dragon mascot/ puppet, about the origin and meaning of this rare sport. Pictures of Brazilian children practising the sport on the streets are shown as visuals for this report. In connection with this presentation, Tabaluga asks German children in the audience, whether they observed any differences between Germany and Brazil.

The "Aktiv-Boxx" also presented the topic of xenophobia. A school class was invited in the studio and the children were asked about experiences of disintegration with children from other nationalities. The experiences are presented via interviews, telephone calls, emails or the accounts from children in the studio. A film actor, who has initiated a school's project against xenophobia talks about his experiences and about possibilities to act against disintegration. The music band, which is part of this project, plays a song of their tour at the end of the programme.

In 2003 a whole weekend was dedicated to this subject. Public service broadcasting initiated a cooperation of the "Kinderkanal" (Ki.Ka) and the other children's television programmes creating a framework against xenophobia and towards tolerance.

Programmes referring to lifestyles (e.g. music, sports, fashion)

In this category, there are generally two formats – television magazines, reporting on lifestyles, and soaps. The TV-magazines are normally trend-magazines. As television magazines reporting on lifestyles, programmes like "Reläxx" (Ki.Ka) and "Pur" (ZDF and Ki.Ka) contribute reports focusing on leisure and culture. Topics such as fashion and music trends, unfamiliar sports, and music, movie, and television stars are covered in these reports. Shows, such as "Pur", "Startaxxi" (Ki.Ka), "beatz per minute" (Ki.Ka) and "Reläxx" incorporate children's input into their programme planning. Children are able to influence the show's themes by calling in or writing emails with suggestions. Aside from this, they are also able to provide live commentary during each show. During the majority of these programmes, the moderator refers to the show's email address and encourages the viewers to write in to the show with their ideas and opinions. In addition, they are also offered chance to participate in games and/ or quizzes.

In soaps like "Schloss Einstein" (Ki.Ka) and "Fabrixx" (ARD), children and youngsters also find issues of social orientation in the macro perspective such as xenophobia and other social issues, but they can also find examples of clothing, housing, and music trends.

Public service broadcasting offers programmes referring to social orientation in children's television

Public service broadcasting offers children a range of programmes that explicitly refer to the above mentioned areas of social orientation. The content and structure of these programmes has a very clear message, the programmes intend to impart information to children and to promote or support integration. Thus, the topics are explained clearly by presenters and mostly designed in a very childlike manner using, for example, colourful backgrounds in the studio or intelligible graphs. All in all, they strongly refer to a very scholastic presentation. Although a show like "Reläxx", a children's magazine, tries to be hip and modern, the way in which the moderators and the children in the shows act reminds the viewers of an atmosphere as in school. However, the situation is actually changing. Both, public broadcasting television and commercial broadcasting are taking some steps towards each other. The latest developments show programmes from public service broadcasting having more in common with children's lifestyle and world. They present moderators who do not act as well-behaved teachers but young people, able to present interesting topics with humour without acting like clowns. Children want to be taken seriously, especially those between the age of ten to 13, who already feel as if they belong to the adults' world.

4. Children's favourite TV-programmes and their offer of social orientation



Illustration 4:

RTL, 2003: "Alarm für Cobra 11 – Die Autobahnpolizei"

Illustration 5:

RTL, 2003: "Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten" (GZSZ)

Illustration 6:

RTL, 2003: "Deutschland sucht den Superstar – Der Superstar"

The analysis of the children's hit-list (programme preferences) is focused on the ten to 13-year-old children because in this age children become more and more independent from their parents or other adult authorities. Their interests are spread beyond family; especially girls are interested in boys and social topics as relationships, the first love and fashion. At this age they start to watch programmes of their own interest, and parents have less control over their TV preferences. Due to this fact, the programmes on the hit-list most probably represent their personal choice. The following programme preferences are differentiated according to girls and boys.

Table 1: Ten to 13-year-old girls prefer the following programmes

Place	Channel	Title	No. of Viewers	MS ⁵
1.	RTL	Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten (GZSZ)	270.000	49,1
2.	RTL	Deutschland sucht den Superstar – Der Superstar	250.000	52,9
3.	RTL	Alarm für Cobra 11 – Die Autobahnpolizei	140.000	33,8
4.	PRO7	Sabrina – Total verhext – Sabrina legt los	130.000	38,1
5.	RTL	WER WIRD MILLIONÄR?	110.000	21,5
6.	SRTL	Jimmy Neutron – Ich denke was, was Du nicht denkst	100.000	20,8
7.	PRO7	DIE SIMPSONS – Krise im Kamp Krusty	90.000	23,7
8.	RTL	TOP OF THE POPS – DSDS-Special	90.000	35,6
9.	SRTL	DISNEYS GROSSE PAUSE – Ermittlungen aller Art, Mickeys großes Vorbild;	90.000	23,1
10.	PRO7	Independence Day	90.000	33,6
11.	SAT.1	Otto – Der Katastrofenfilm	90.000	26,4
12.	ZDF	ZDF SPORTextra: Moderation	90.000	19,7
13.	RTL2	X-FACTOR: DAS UNFASSBARE – Rettet den Regenwald,	80.000	25,3
14.	SRTL	ANGELA ANACONDA – Strandfreuden, Ein böser Hund	80.000	21,1
15.	RTL	KRÜGER SIEHT ALLES	80.000	29,1
16.	ARD	BERLIN – BERLIN – Die Geliebte	80.000	18,9
17.	SRTL	SPONGEBOB SCHWAMMKOPF	70.000	13,3
18.	ARD	VERSTEHEN SIE SPASS?	70.000	15,2
19.	RTL	RTL News Spezial	70.000	14,2
20.	ARD	MARIENHOF	70.000	22,4

 public service broadcasting

 commercial broadcasting

Quelle: BESTANDSAUFNAHME KINDERFERNSEHEN AGF/GfK PC#TV 2003

⁵ MS = market share in percent

Table 2: Ten to 13 year old boys prefer the following programmes

Place	Channel	Title	No. of Viewers	MS ⁶
1.	SAT.1	Otto – Der Katastrofenfilm	210.000	40,7
2.	RTL	Alarm für Cobra 11 – Die Autobahnpolizei	200.000	47,4
3.	RTL2	YU-GI-OH!	170.000	63,8
4.	PRO7	Independence Day	160.000	41,2
5.	PRO7	Galileo	160.000	33,3
6.	RTL	Gute Zeiten, schlechte Zeiten (GZSZ)	160.000	30,4
7.	RTL	Deutschland sucht den Superstar – Der Superstar	150.000	33,0
8.	RTL2	Detektiv Conan – Der Milliardenraub	130.000	52,1
9.	RTL2	BEYBLADE	130.000	47,4
10.	SRTL	DISNEYS GROSSE PAUSE – Ermittlungen aller Art, Mickeys großes Vorbild;	120.000	34,2
11.	SRTL	DISNEYS GROSSE PAUSE – Pausengeschäfte; Allein sein kann gemein sein	110.000	31,4
12.	ZDF	ZDF SPORTextra: Moderation	110.000	26,3
13.	SRTL	SPONGEBOB SCHWAMMKOPF	110.000	21,4
14.	SRTL	Jimmy Neutron – Ich denke was, was Du nicht denkst	110.000	21,3
15.	SRTL	Disneys große Pause – T.J. bekommt Ärger	100.000	33,2
16.	PRO7	DIE SIMPSONS – Krise im Kamp Krusty	100.000	25,0
17.	SRTL	MR. BEAN – DIE CARTOON-SERIE – Such!	100.000	22,0
18.	SRTL	Jimmy Neutron – Schnell wie der Wind	100.000	22,4
19.	RTL2	Shin Chan – auf Tuchfühlung, der Schlaf des Geächteten, Sternbild Wildsau	100.000	50,3
20.	SRTL	ANGELA ANACONDA – Strandfreuden, Ein böser Hund	90.000	20,3

 public service broadcasting

 commercial broadcasting

Quelle: BESTANDSAUFNAHME KINDERFERNSEHEN AGF/GfK PC#TV 2003

Programme favourites: Common ground and differences

fact, one can see the usual differences between girl's and boys' favourites. In comparison to boys, girls like every-day-life-stories with a realistic touch. On the girl's hit-list we can find daily soaps ("GZSZ", "Berlin, Berlin", "Marienhof") and series ("Alarm für Cobra 11 – Die Autobahnpolizei", "Sabrina – Total verhext") that mostly refer to social topics like relationships, lovesickness, and lifestyle. But beyond this surface, these programmes present powerful female characters. The women in the series as well as in the daily soaps represent the image of modern women: self-confident and successful. Nevertheless they also are able to show their weak side, talking about lovesickness or unquestioning love. Girls find answers to how women look like, how they behave and feel as members of a modern society. They observe successful behaviour and they reflect on the role models shown on the screen as they talk about their soap with friends. Daily Soaps, such as "GZSZ" (RTL), "Berlin, Berlin" (ARD), "Marienhof" (ARD), also serve to provide a "style guide" for children. Children rethink their respective lifestyles and begin to orientate themselves towards the trends, fashions, and styles they find in soaps. But soaps also offer topics concerning society and its changes, as for example non-traditional family structures, drug problems, eating disorders due to the

⁶ MS = market share in percent

social image of an ideal figure, sexual orientations, and many others. In daily soaps these are more or less presented superficially but the viewers tend to discuss the topics with friends or other persons of confidence. Here they reflect upon their own view and the mainstream views of society, about right and wrong. Research studies have shown that daily soaps are followed by discussions about moral standards (Hajok 2003).

The shows (“Deutschland sucht den Superstar”, Top of the Pops – DSDS-Special, “Wer wird Millionär?”) on the hit-list present successful members of society and every day life. Participants of this show can be everyone who fulfils the prerequisites tested in previous castings. The winners of these shows have certain competences they have trained to win and therefore they are rewarded with fame. What they do not show explicitly are the mechanisms of media and the negative aspects of the media world. It is not questioned, as an example, that only good looking singers win the contest of “Deutschland sucht den Superstar”, or that the young winners have difficulties to cope with the pressure of their new popularity. Of course, the music or casting shows also offer topics on lifestyle. The singers wear the latest fashion and hair style and present popular songs.

But girls also like to see cartoons. These are shown on the commercial broadcasting channels and represent the children’s every day life, referring to the relation with parents and friends, or school and the related problems. The topics are rather those of six to nine-year-old children, who are the main viewers of these cartoons. Girls might watch these because they have become used to them and they belong to their daily routine or ritual, a habit of which they have grown very fond. An exception is the cartoon “The Simpsons”, which is more an adult cartoon alluding to societal problems and preposterousness in a humoristic way. As the “Simpsons” represent a family and children play a central role, they are also attractive to girls and boys in the age between ten and 13, Lisa’s and Bart’s age. The young viewers might not understand every allusion, but they can observe the reactions on Bart’s unconventional behaviour and Lisa’s moral discourses and social engaged behaviour.

The movies (“Independence Day”, “Otto – Der Katastrofenfilm”) as well as the football league championship (“Sport extra”) may first and foremost be a social event, watching a film or game together with parents on a Sunday evening. Despite of this, the films as well as the football game transport role models that may be of interest in respect to social orientation. In this regard and against the backdrop of the actual political situation (the war against the Iraq in 2003), “Independence Day” transports an image of the Americans as the world’s police force, legitimating the war against the Iraq. In the movie the war was the only alternative to cope with the enemy and to avoid the extermination of the human race.

The boys also meet the stereotypes watching action series and cartoons such as “Alarm für Cobra 11 – Die Autobahnpolizei”, “Yu-Gi-Oh!”, “Detektiv Conan” and “Beyblade”. Taking a closer look the series also show trusting friendship and moral discourses. The characters discuss social behaviour and the need of teamwork to be on the winning side.

In comparison to the girls, “Galileo” a scientific documentary magazine takes place 5 on the boy’s hit-list. The actual episode reports on Saddam Hussein security bunkers and their safety against the American attacks. Besides the detailed explanation of technical details of bunkers and the American weapons, the documentary deals with the presentation of good and evil, without mentioning that the weapons of the western heroes may also damage civilians and innocents’ lives. The second part of this episode of “Galileo” explains the way of a vacuum cleaner to the page of a mail-order catalogue.

Against all stereotype ideas, the boys also watch the daily soap “GZSZ” and the casting show “Deutschland sucht den Superstar”, on place 6 and 7 of their hit-list.

Boys and girls have in common watching the more childlike cartoons on Super RTL “Disneys grosse Pause”, “Jimmy Neutron”, “Spongebob”, and “Angela Anaconda”. The series treat themes like friendship, school and the problems around it as well as other struggles in a child’s every day life. In addition to that and the “Simpsons”, the boys also see “Mr. Bean – Die Cartoon-Serie”, a slap stick format.

Other common preferences of girls and boys are the Sunday-evening-movies (“Independence Day”, “Otto – Der Katastrofenfilm”) and the football league championship for

eventually the same reason as already mentioned. Although, the football game also attracts boys, who are into football, because of athletic interests.

5. Does children's television meet the interests in social orientation of today's children?

The most striking aspect of the difference between supply and demand, that means between the offer of children's television and the children's hit-list, is that the presented programmes aiming at social orientation do not appear at all on the children's hit-lists (the hit-lists of the years 2001 and 2002 are very similar). The programmes that explicitly intend an orientation for children's social life are not perceived by the ten to 13-year-olds.

Even the weekend special in the year 2003, the so called "Gi'me 5" project, did not reach the number of viewers of any of the commercial broadcasting programmes mentioned above. As an example, the number of viewers of "PuR", a magazine with information on social relevant topics for children and youngsters, reached 20.000 children aged ten to 13. The daily soap "GZSZ" could attract 430.000 children of the same age.

Both hit-lists show that most of children's favourite programmes are those from commercial broadcasting. There are also programmes with political and social topics such as "Galileo" or the news on RTL, but there is no example offered by children's television.

A closer look on the children's favourite TV programmes reveals that these also imply topics on social orientation as for example, daily soaps or series do in a more subtle way, integrating them in the plot of the story. These programmes refer to the following themes:

- Lifestyle,
- Moral/ ethic discussions (fair play, honesty, ethical questions),
- The importance of friendship,
- The importance of teamwork,
- Examples for successful communication strategies,
- Relationships.

Children also find examples for a harmonious living together of different ethnic groups in soaps and series. They show Turks, Jews or Italians living in the German society being successful businessmen, close/ intimate friends or wise advisers, but they do not refer to their traditions and customs explicitly nor do they refer to their ethnic backgrounds.

Children do find offers for social orientation, and other research studies have stated that they look for answers to these topics in television, but they seem to refer to their very individual lives, especially concerning harmonious relationships and satisfying friendships. The hit-lists suggest that children aged ten to 13 are not interested in the programmes referring to societal developments and changes in children's television. Another reason for this result might be that these programmes belong to children's television and they do not want to be seen as little children any longer. Furthermore the kind of (re)presentation of children's television programmes might not attract their interest or really represent their living situation (Lebensgefühl, Lebenssituation). Debates about children's media preferences and their relationship with politics have already been discussed. Here, young people are seen as merely ignorant and not politically interested. Other studies (e.g. Shell) have shown that young people are not simply being apathetic, but that they need a connection to their own every-day-live. Children and young people define politics more personal and try to see how they can act politically in their personal surroundings. The analysis of the so called "Kindernutzungsflächen" (see note 8) showed that children did watch news programmes when they were placed close to their programme favourites. This means that they watched these formats before their programmes started or when it already ended and they still did not switch to another programme.

However, we have seen that the hit-lists do not show the kind of programmes that are reason for adult's concern, such as talk shows, reality shows or trial shows (reality trials), which promote stereotypes and clichés and demonstrate inappropriate styles of communication.

Taking the results into consideration, one major goal for Media Education and Pedagogy in general is to mediate between the media as well as its content and children's needs. This implies to consider children's needs and wishes as well as their daily orientations, not to

implant worldviews systematically into their everyday life, but to support the ability to reflect their own lives and living conditions.

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