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THE ROLE OF MYTHOLOGICAL IDEAS IN CHILDREN'S
SOCIALIZATION AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

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Abstract

Social trends of technologization and informatization, an increasing focus on rational thinking have failed to displace traditional fundamental social and psychological basics of human culture. Despite all social transformations, mythological ideas still remain a powerful instrument for personal socialization, adjusting the formation of values, moral reference points and attitudes via literature, advertising and cinematography. They make an impact on socialization and subjective well-being by activating components of the collective unconscious. One of the main sources of the present-day mythological ideas are fairy-tales plots and images; when acquired, they allow an individual to predict social interaction' results, to create the figurative picture of the world that triggers the simulation of fairy-tale characters' behaviour. Thus, mythological ideas present a significant pedagogical tool because of its strong influence on adolescents' identification and socialization determined by broadening self-consciousness and the following exit of the archetypal behavioural patterns from the unconscious to consciousness. At the same time, it is a high-risk area where negative manipulative effects on teenagers may occur.

The practical importance of the study analyzing the role of mythological resources in personal development gives further insight into adolescents' worldview that allows for anticipating the trends in their behavioural strategies and social values, identifying possible risks and providing an optimal environment for the child's personal subjective well-being to be secure.

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Keywords: Myth, mythological ideas, archetype, fairy-tale, behavioural strategies, subjective well-being.



1. Introduction

Rapid technological and informational development and social changes in modern society in no way exclude the significance of traditional basic social and psychological backgrounds of socio-cultural life, and among them the myth stands out. Even at the earliest historical stages, the myth and mythology represent versatile means of cognition and reflection of the world, and nowadays they remain one of the most important ways to preserve the traditions in response to continuous transformations to which modern society is exposed.

In their history, different nations developed the complex of mythical narrations about gods, heroes, primogenitors, as well as the complex of particular rituals, mythical with regard to their contents, which transferred mythological ideas. The mythological ideas as a psychological phenomenon were not only the elements of individual psyche but, acquiring the collective dimension, they expressed the group attitude toward socially sensitive objects and phenomena, reflected the specific group worldview that simultaneously served both as a historical narrative of the past and as a tool for explaining the present or even the future. C. Levi-Strauss wrote that the myth always referred to the events of the past: «before the Genesis» or «at the beginning of time», whatever the case, «once upon a time». However, the importance of myths was that these events while occurred at the particular moment actually existed outside the hours (Levi-Strauss, 2001, P. 213).

The form of mythological narrative, which has lost nothing of its relevance for ages, is a fairy-tale. In the course of its evolution, especially since the emergence of numerous printed books in the 17th century, the fairy-tale has become the specific literature genre aimed at the needs and interests of children's education that made it a powerful tool for person's socialization. Thus, the pedagogical practice using the fairy-tale in the upbringing of the younger generation attaches the highest importance to underlying spiritual and moral sense. «The practical aspect of the socio-cultural function of fairy-tales is that it has been capable of developing the feelings of co-unity, co-trust, com-compassion and co-operation in the youth since their early childhood. We think that the fairy-tale is not only a powerful determinant changing the motivation of conduct but also a social force consolidating human communities» (Kol'tsova, 2000, P. 6).

The pedagogical capacities of the fairy-tale are determined by the fact that, based on mythological ideas and senses, education can directly approach the child's unconscious; activate its supraconscious processes, in order to help him orientate himself in social world, to strengthen his psychological grounds for subjective well-being. In particular, as O. Y. Zotova notes, this goal is reached due to happy ends of the most fairy-tales, where, having overcome many obstacles, a force of good finally prevails against a force of evil. This «helps to dissipate fears, worries, and anxiety in children, even if they cannot understand that the grim reality has not disappeared» (Zotova, 2017, P. 202).

2. Problem Statement

With respect to the general theory of socialization, the fairy-tale represents the rich sociocultural experience of humanity and archetypical images, reflecting the mythological ideas of the nation as well. They derive from the collective unconscious and have the social orienting and social protecting potential supplying the individual with typical models of interactions in universal sociocultural situations and establishing the definite value dispositions, which provide the integration of the subject on definite stages

of his personal development. The adolescent subject is in the midst of identification process, which is a stage of socialization; it reveals a distinctive aspiration to study his own «self». The immersion in his inner world activates various emotional states, the plots and images of fairy-tales can be one of the sources for this experience. In this regard, A. N. Veraksa says, «The fairy-tale induces strong emotions in a child making his imagination work» (Veraksa, 2009, P. 39). Moreover, the reliance on these plots and images, mythological by nature, promotes the development of figurative thinking of a child from his early age. In this process, the archetypal intensity of fairy-tale characters serves as «the building blocks» to constitute interpersonal and social relations (father/mother – child, teacher – pupil, superior – subordinate). The fairy-tale translates the archetypes of the father, the mother, the hero, the shadow, the trickster, etc. suggesting the universal timeless models of behavior in typical sociocultural situations and interpreting events and other subjects in the archetypal “coordinate” system.

Being expressed in the fairy-tale, the mythological ideas work as an efficient instrument of personal identification and socialization, making it possible for the individual to predict effectively the results of social interactions, to build the figurative picture of the world through activating the processes, which overlap the behaviour of fairy-tale characters in real life.

We would like to highlight the following statements, essential for our study:

1. The main character of the fairy-tale is characterized by three leading strategies of behavior: the active, the expectant and the retrieval (in a difficult situation). These strategies make an impact on subjective well-being models; develop the ideas of various paths to gain the subjective well-being (SWB).

2. The active behavioural strategy of the main character implies the initiative, which manifests itself in two aspects – the positive, creative, and the negative – destructive one.

3. The expectant strategy of the main character’s behaviour suggests the gradual evaluation of the situation and the analysis of consistent ways to approach SWB.

4. The retrieval strategy is accelerated when the situation is difficult: the fairy-tale character is intensively looking for the best options to win his foes or to solve a complex problem using his experience, unorthodox approaches and the help of mythological heroes.

5. The path of the main character most often resembles the individuation and socialization process of man. With this, the fairy-tale characters representing different types of personality maintain the ego-identification in adolescent period. The teenagers, when entering the mental space of the fairy-tale, broaden their identification and socialization patterns.

6. The choice of strategy by the child correlates with his moving towards his own model of subjective well-being. Thus, the active strategy corresponds to the pragmatist model of personal subjective well-being, the expectant strategy matches the passive subjective well-being model, and the retrieval one can be associated with the innovative model.

3. Research Questions

1. Do the behavioural strategies and personal traits of favourite fairy-tale characters exert an impact on children’s socialization?

2. Does the choice of the behavioural strategy made by a child correlate with the formation of his subjective well-being model?

4. Purpose of the Study

The research is aimed at studying fairy-tale images and their influence on children's socialization and their aspiration for SWB.

5. Research Methods

The methodological basis of the study included the L. S. Vygotsky's cultural-historic theory, theoretical insights made by A. G. Asmolov, L. I. Bozhovich, Y. B. Gippenreiter, A. V. Zaporozhets, I. S. Kohn, A. N. Leontiev, V. S. Mukhina, L. F. Obukhova, S. L. Rubinstein; the Z. Freud's psychoanalytical model of mind, E. Erikson's theory of transitional crisis, Jungian approach to interpretation of fairy-tales, structural and functional analysis of fairy-tales characters and their functions and V. F. Petrenko's (Petrenko, 1988) psychosemantic approach to research and description of consciousness. In examining the models of subjective well-being, the views of R. E. Lucas (Lucas, 2007), E. Diener, E.M. Suh, R. E. Lucas, H. L. Smith (Diener et al., 1999), A. Durayappah (Durayappah, 2011), C. Peterson, N. Park, M. E. P. Seligman (Peterson et al., 2005) and E. Diener (Diener, 2006) were taken into account.

The SWB model, conceptualized by E. Diener (Diener, 1984), underlined the research on behavioural strategies of fairy-tale characters considered as directed to quality of their lives, correlation of positive and negative effects and cognitive judgments. The purpose of the study also took into consideration the stages of SWB; however, this aspect requires a special study to be undertaken as well as the further specification of existing research methods concerning children.

The research results of 2015-2016 constituted the empirical base of the study. The total number of respondents comprised 80 people; they were 8-grade schoolchildren from Krasnoyarsk and Yekaterinburg, 38 boys and 42 girls among them.

A number of methods ensured scientific validity and credibility of research results and conclusions: 1) the questionnaire to reveal the semantics related to perceptions of the respondents' favourite fairy-tale characters; 2) the projective drawing techniques focused on socialization strategy research «A Man. A Man in the Rain» (Romanova & Syt'ko, 1992); 3) the projective drawing technique «A rain in Fairyland», aimed at studying the resource strategies of socialization (Zinkevich-Yevstigneyeva, 1998).

In addition to the above mentioned methods, to clarify the issues regarding the research purposes, the schoolchildren (N=80) were offered to listen to the following fairy-tales: «Kousma Skorobogaty (Kuzma and the Fox)», «Ilya Muromets (Ilya of Murom) near Chernigov» and «Ilya of Murom and Nightingale the Robber», «The Tale of Apples of Youth and Water of Life». Ilya of Murom demonstrated the active behavioural strategy, according to which he himself looked for challenges and won due to his own abilities and talents. The main character of «Kuzma and the Fox» could be punctuated with the expectant strategy; he coped with all the hardships with the help of his mythological assistant (the fox). «The Tale of Apples of Youth and Water of Life» told us about the adventures of Ivan-Tsarevich (Ivan the Prince) who headed off on a long journey to find magic objects and got them dealing with various complex situations where he used his creative energy and reached his goals, at the same time, representing the triumph of morality and good over evil.

The questionnaire aimed at clarifying perceptions related to the semantics of fairy tale characters suggested that the schoolchildren should evaluate 7 objects: 1) their favorite fairy tale character of their

early childhood; 2) the character who has earned their affection at present; 3) Ilya of Murom; 4) Kousma Skorobogaty; 5) Ivan-Tsarevich; 6) a person with pro-active attitude toward life; 7) the respondent himself.

The schoolchildren evaluated the objects using the following descriptors (scales): 1) cold – warm; 2) unassured – self-assured; 3) slow – fast; 4) ugly – beautiful; 5) passive – active; 6) quiet – noisy; 7) bitter – sweet; 8) immodest – modest; 9) inert – cheerful; 10) repugnant – pleasant; 11) wicked – kind; 12) dim – bright.

The descriptors «immodest/modest», «wicked/kind» and «ugly/beautiful» were described by E.M. Meletinskiy (Meletinskiy et al., 2001, P. 38) as essential characteristic features of a fairy-tale character. The descriptors cold/warm, bitter/sweet, repugnant/pleasant and dim/bright refer to axiological areas, and the descriptors unassured/self-assured, slow/fast, passive/active, quiet/noisy and inert/cheerful relate to the «activity» scale.

6. Findings

In the course of processing the research results, two groups of factors were distinguished. The first factor included the following parameters: «I», «the favourite fairy-tale character of my early childhood», «the character who has earned my affection at present». The second factor involved «Ilya of Murom», «a person with pro-active attitude toward life», «Kousma Skorobogaty», «Ivan-Tsarevich» (Table 01).

Table 01. Matrix of Rotated Components

	Components	
	1	2
I	.945	-.098
Character in childhood	.820	.495
Character at present	.728	.618
Ilya of Murom	.335	.842
Active person	.526	.802
Kousma Skorobogaty	-.086	.658
Ivan-Tsarevich	.405	.740

The first factor including the respondent himself, his favorite fairy-tale character of his pre-school age and the character, who has earned his affection at present, shows a coincidence of these objects' features. The first factor witnesses, that fairy tale characters favoured in pre-school age significantly affect the identification process. The second factor, which presents the evaluation of images of Ilya of Murom, Kousma Skorobogaty, Ivan-Tsarevich and a person with pro-active attitude, demonstrates that fairy-tale characters not covered in the previous category are rejected by the children as the proposed models of identification and socialization. The subjects under test describe the first group using the following characteristics: unassured (Descriptor № 2), quiet (Descriptor № 6), immodest (Descriptor № 8), pleasant (Descriptor №10) (Table 02). “Unassured” and “immodest” are the important features for the first group of factors, they reveal that the adolescences have high social aspirations (immodest), on the one hand, and the feeling of uncertainty, on the other hand. The most significant characteristics of the second group are the following: self-assured (Descriptor № 2) and immodest (Descriptor № 8) (Table 02). Accordingly, the

participants of our study associate the active attitude toward life with high social status and aspirations (immodest and self-assured), but not with actual behavioral models of differentiated characters like Ilya of Murom, Kousma Skorobogaty, Ivan-Tsarevich.

Table 02. General Data

Descriptor	Character in childhood	Character at present	Ilya	I	Kousma	Ivan	Active person	Factor 1	Factor 2
1	390	310	287	323	336	321	348	- 0.07357	- 0.24424
2	371	377	428	283	369	329	405	- 1.27017	- 1.86542
3	381	388	425	314	278	316	423	0.18568	0.56308
4	381	409	315	341	318	324	356	0.75415	- 0.30191
5	407	406	432	330	262	380	448	0.93235	0.35487
6	304	308	326	279	339	342	361	- 1.81677	- 0.69432
7	309	312	261	313	288	301	315	- 0.56631	- 0.89132
8	277	220	199	288	217	239	193	- 1.26948	- 2.31456
9	385	389	418	324	262	369	435	0.57526	0.26674
10	402	409	319	343	302	338	397	1.07414	- 0.28057
11	396	377	356	359	343	363	376	0.96509	- 0.08094
12	392	377	361	335	324	345	431	0.50963	0.3691

The projective drawing technique deliberated by Romanova and Syt'ko «A Man. A Man in the Rain» (Romanova & Syt'ko, 1992) has also contributed to distinguishing the socialization strategies of the schoolchildren. As the results of the tests show, the majority of the respondents described the figure as active and effective (80%). Besides, it was found that the extremal situation leads to the change of the active socialization strategy for the expectant strategy, but it may only apply to a small percentage of respondents (10%).

The projective technique «Rain in the Fairyland» provides the data for studying resource strategies of the adolescents' socialization. The drawing «A Rain in Fairyland» activates imagination, indicates the optimal model of coping with the difficulty. Similar to the descriptor «character, who has earned me affection at present», the drawing «Rain in the Fairyland» shows the choice of socialization strategy. The study makes it clear that 70% of the respondents prefer the active socialization strategy, 10% of them consider the expectant strategy to be a priority; and 20% choose the retrieval strategy.

The values embedded in the drawings became an important source of psychological information as well. Applying the technique demonstrated that 80% of the testees figured symbolic fabulous objects, 70% of the children drew people, 65% of schoolers pictured natural objects. These findings can testify to the

prevailing role of spiritual values in the adolescents' lives; the second place belongs to communication values and the third place goes to vital ones.

7. Conclusion

Favourite fairy-tale characters have the same personal qualities as the favourite personages of teenagers. Therefore, we can suggest that mythological ideas embedded in these favourite fairy-tale characters of the early age can exert the influence on the choice of socialization strategies in the adolescent period. The adolescents more often choose an active socialization strategy, which allows the individual to realize himself as the subject of his own well-being; who, in turn, lays greater emphasis on initiative, effectiveness of his position manifesting itself both in creation and in destruction. This ambivalent possibility requires parents and teachers being attentive. The study reveals the relevance of the child's preference of the active strategy of the fairy-tale character and the active model of subjective well-being; in case when the expectant strategy is chosen, there is a coincidence with the passive subjective well-being model. When a child prefers the retrieval strategy, he is guided by the innovative subjective well-being model.

Based on this consistency of qualities and behavioural strategies of the fairy-tale characters, there are some prerequisites helping to reveal the character type preferred by modern teenagers as a universal model of their identification and socialization. Judging by the complex of mythological ideas, one can state that this character type most likely resembles the archetype of the Trickster, which reflects the inner duality of the adolescents. The Trickster can be a creator and a destructor. He can put together such contradictory traits, preferred by our respondents, as «immodest» и «self-assured». The adolescents' inclination to feel affection for the Trickster archetype characteristics, to accept him as the model of socialization and identification, on the one hand, is the result of necessity for the teenagers to go through the contradictions of this transition period. The adolescents have to overcome the hardships related to establishing individuality, developing personality, seeking for value orientations and understanding social requirements. On the other hand, this preference of images carried by this archetype indicates the tendency of “the shift of values”, ambiguity in differentiating the good and the evil. This is the consequence of globalization processes eliminating traditional values of national cultures in modern society. In these circumstances, it is worth speaking of sociocultural and psychological vulnerability of children that requires timely corrective and preventive measures that families and schools as the subjects of educational processes should provide.

The arguments using the mythological contents are known to improve the communicator's position and his argumentation by means of attracting and applying the capacities of the collective unconscious. On the one hand, this can be regarded as the perspective of pedagogical influence for successful socialization and secure subjective well-being. On the other hand, it is a risk area when it comes to manipulating the teenage audience for commercial or other indecent purposes. The fact that a part of the respondents chose the retrieval socialization strategy and, accordingly, the innovative model of subjective well-being expresses the subjects' readiness to accept the changing environment and to seek for optimal ways of performing their tasks. Whether they are going to undertake this search considering basic spiritual and moral values or not, can be treated as a crucial pedagogical and educational goal.

There is a clear need for spiritual values and this need determines the popularity of the fairy-tale images among teenagers. The fairy-tales characters representing different types of personality promote the establishing of ego-identity in the adolescent period. When reaching this stage, individuals tend to use fairy-tales as the personal development resource. For that very reason, fairy-tale images are actively exploited in advertisements, animated cartoons and cinematography products, which are consumed by teenagers; the genre of fantasy, the modern replica of fairy-tales proved to be of greater demand.

The present-day films and cartoons while multiplying the images of fairy-tale characters change them dramatically in terms of their meanings and values. The 'heroes' of modern films often commit the deeds contradicting the traditional values and thus they destruct the formula of fairy-tales. The fairy-tale has a consistent and sustainable structure, where the limited ranges of characters perform their specific functions, irrespective of diversity of plots, meanings and images (Permyakov, 1972, P. 11). The modern fantasy in its animated or cinematographic versions destroys the traditional structure of the fairy-tale and transforms the functions of its characters and as a result, alters the harmonizing socio-cultural role of the fairy-tale, thus posing the potential threat to adequate choice of the child's behavioral strategy and becoming the obstacle to his subjective well-being. The hero in a traditional fairy-tale always achieved his goals through acts of genuine kindness, the anti-hero pursued his objectives through doing evil things, their magic assistants combined both tactics – the kind and the evil – and this is, namely, what the Trickster is responsible for. Hence, the magic assistant turns into the main hero in the present-day realities. The myth is transformed at the level of everyday consciousness. And this is the reason for damaging the subjective well-being via value disorientation, devaluation of the archetypical images imported from the fairy-tale by advertising and cinematography.

The fairy tale characters reproduce the social interaction models necessary for the people to have their behavioural cue for reaching goals, to receive a guidance for acting, to possess the sub-conscious confidence in their effectiveness that results in the formation of the basis for personal subjective well-being. «The confidence in security and safety appears when the risk and uncertainty has been minimized» (Dontsov & Perelygina, 2017, P. 156). The mythological ideas embedded in the fairy tales characters can create such confidence. However, the effects of mythological ideas, so intensive in the fairy tales, not only exert the transforming influence on the personality but also determine the dynamics and directions of social processes on the whole, that is why they must be taken into consideration both when the efficient pedagogical techniques are implemented and the strategies of educational policies are introduced. «Provision of any sort of support – psychological intervention, pedagogical – is impossible without the insight into child's inner experiences. These experiences embrace a host of unconscious elements shaped by many environmental factors further internalized» (Zotova et al., 2016. P. 161).

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