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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Gagik Harutyunyan

Demography as a Critical Area 5

Yiannos Charalambides

The Lernaean Hydra of Terrorism 15

Tigran Babasyan

Secular Economy as Viewed from Christian Perspective 29

Gagik Terterov

Armenia – Diaspora: New Challenges 55

Alexey Shanyavsky

The Eurasian Future of the Republic of Armenia 62

Marek Jan Chodakiewicz

The Armenian Portent and Paradigm:
Toward Re-Conceptualizing the Armenian Tragedy 70

Eduard L. Danielyan

Armenian Statehood and Governance Through Millennia:
History and Modernity 77

Vahram Hovyan

Armenian Community of Egypt 89

Naghash Martirosyan, Anahit Menemshyan, Zaruhi Sargsyan

The Influence of Soap Operas on Armenian TV
on the Formation of the Social Behavior of Teenager 96

Mher Sahakyan

EU Policy on Iranian Proliferation Issue (2000-2014) 113

Naghash Martirosyan, *PhD of Philology, Associated Professor*
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The Influence of Soap Operas on Armenian TV on the Formation of the Social Behaviour of Teenager

Key Words - Television, Soap Operas, Values, Teenager, Media policy, Social Behaviour

Introduction

Television and TV serials in particular, are widely consumed by Armenian teenagers. They greatly influence the process of the formation of the teenager as an individual, develop certain social attitudes and determine a certain type of behavior among teenagers.

The primary goal of the research is to reveal the reasons for the manifestation of the teenager's social behavior influenced by the TV serials made in Armenia as well as to understand the drawbacks of the TV products of this type (TV serials).

The research on media impact and social attitude carried out by the Western theoretical school, the data provided by the National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia as well as the data collected from surveys carried out among the teenagers all over the Republic (which in addition to other questions also include questions concerning Armenian TV serials) have been used as a theoretical background for the study of the above-mentioned issues.

During the research process the Armenian TV serials which are mostly watched by Armenian teenagers have been thoroughly examined. An attempt has been made to identify the messages conveyed by the TV serials and the attitudes they form. The findings of the research have been combined with the above-mentioned surveys carried out among teenagers throughout the Republic. Incidentally, these surveys present the social attitudes of teenagers towards various issues of our reality, namely the army, family, cultural reality, books, school, etc. They also enable revealing the most popular TV channels and serials with the teenagers.

Adolescence (according to most specialists between ages 12 and 16) is the most vulnerable age from psychological point of view. At this period the teenager starts reconsidering his/her former attitudes, tries to skip the influence of the seniors, becomes more aware of public opinion, tries to get adjusted to the accepted rules and to assert himself/herself among his/her peers.

In this respect the role of television is very important. Especially as according to the specialists, television is in the third place with its force of impact on the teenager after the family and school. According to the French theoreticians in the field of communication, every person above the age of 12 daily spends 3 and a half hours on average in front of the TV which makes more than 1200 hours per

year or nearly 2 months during the year. Thus, the teenager gets the code of life, family and other values from the TV screen. He is provided with ready-made, established values formed not in the result of life experience and knowledge but on the screenⁱ:

TV serials define certain way of thinking, break and develop stereotypes, change the accepted rules in society, distort the psychological, value and conventional picture of society. The screen defines a certain standard of lifestyle for the teenagers. And in this case, the child's identity, his or her upbringing have little significance as he or she is in the process of active transformations and the messages coming from the screen significantly influence the process of the formation of his or her identity expressed in the form of certain ambitions and certain behavioral patterns. These manifestations are expressed in the process of the teenager's self-realization as a member of society or family and as a representative of a nation.

In Armenian reality TV serials started to be shown in the 1990s. Brazilian, Argentinian, Venezuelan soap operas attracted large audience at once becoming a topic of everyday conversations and discussions. The first Armenian soap opera was broadcast in 2003 and attracted large audience at once. In one of the studies on soap operas (Herzog's Research) 3 main reasons are presented with regard to the audience's affection towards soap operas. They are the following: emotional discharge, fantasy satisfaction and thirst for information and adviceⁱⁱ. All these three factors can serve as an important impetus for watching soap operas especially as far as teenagers are concerned.

From the very first day of showing and propagating soap operas their impact on social life has been most actively discussed. Soap operas are supposed to introduce new unacceptable values and ideas to society, they are considered to be worthless and bad quality products. And very often as far as the phenomenon of soap opera is concerned, no particular soap opera is singled out. Before introducing our research on TV serials let us first consider this criticism which develops a certain attitude towards the product presenting it negatively. The problem exists not only in Armenia.

Charlotte Brunsdon engaged with the study of soap operas refers to Dorothy Hobson who upbraids television critics for employing critical criteria derived from high art in the evaluation of a popular form such as soap opera, and appears to argue that popularity itself should be a central evaluative criterionⁱⁱⁱ.

Thus, to bridge that gap between the critic and audience Brunsdon applies two strategies: the first one is called the addiction strategy when the critics view the audience as a person watching the soap opera unwillingly. "The soap opera is regarded as opium for the masses, particularly for women, it is sympathetic, delusive, the product and producer of pseudo consciousness".^{iv} The second strategy is called «kitsch strategy» when phenomena are criticized but are watched with pleasure as well. It is

obvious that these two strategies are trying to avoid accepting the fact that most people enjoy soap operas and take them seriously. In our studies we shall try to ignore these two approaches. We consider the teenager to be an individual who can accept the soap opera differently. Taking this fact into consideration during our surveys we have tried to get the rough characteristic of the personality of each teenager, to identify their world outlook, way of thinking and their cultural ideas.

Though Ch. Brunson considers their poor quality inarguable she also argues why they are unlikely to improve: “to millions of fans production values are clearly not the point-or at least not the main point. I can spot shaky scenery, a muffled line, an odd shadow, as well as the next fan. But what I watch for is different. It is partly a ritual pleasure, which offers reassurance in its familiarity and regularity.”^v

It should be mentioned that in the soap operas under study we have instantly spotted the muffled line, scenes contradicting one another, shortcoming, faults, etc., but the fact that the Armenian teenager’s favorite TV product is the soap opera completely confirms Brunson’s words.

Taking into account the above-mentioned facts, it should be mentioned that in our research we shall avoid employing critical criteria derived from high art in the evaluation of soap operas which consider soap operas to be simple and worthless product or simply “Junk”. Soap operas are an important part of mass culture. In modern media and cultural studies more often the impacts and messages which conveyed by soap operas are considered. They help to form social attitudes towards the phenomena surrounding us.

There are different definitions for social attitude but more often it is defined as the individual’s orientation towards a particular social object. Social attitude ensures long-term emotional and conscious attitude towards a phenomenon or person and the targeted, long-term change of social attitudes can bring the change of society’s cultural identity. That is to say, the transformations of the Armenian teenager’s social attitudes will account for the values, the quality and type of the cultural environment of the next society.

When measuring the impact of soap operas on the teenager it should be determined especially on which component (cognitive, affective and behavioral) of the teenager’s social attitude and to what extent the given soap opera produces impact. This can help to check the stability of social attitude: the attitude formed at the cognitive level may be more stable than that formed at the emotional level. The carried out surveys also help us to identify the level of the teenager’s motivation and the level of his cognitive capacities to some extent. Therefore, some methods are selected which influence the formation of social attitudes. The methods which are more closely related to media impact are defined within the framework of the theories of “Persuasive Messages” (Carl Hovland) and “Systematic

Information Processing” (McGuire). Our soap operas are typical with respect to the application of both theories as they produce daily impact both on conscious and unconscious levels applying both theories.

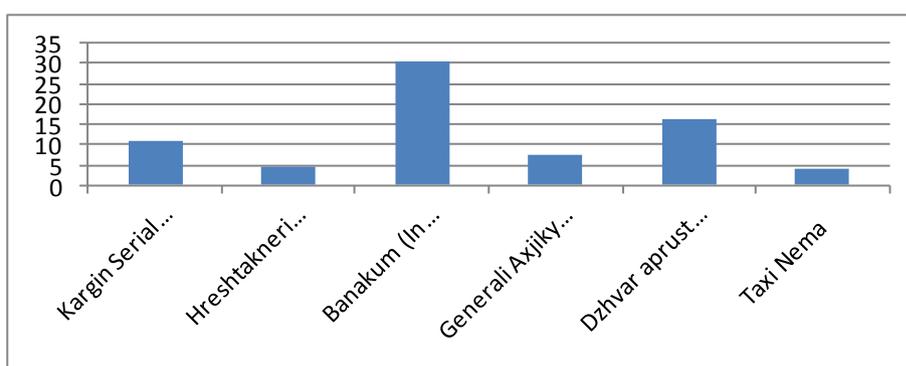
In case of the **Theory of Persuasive Messages** media develops or changes social attitudes with its constant persuasive messages. In this respect the approach of the recipient is important as well who is viewed as an active party of information processing. Depending on the type of information processing (central or peripheral) the process of formation and transformation of social attitude is greatly changed.

The central model assumes a cognitive, conscious approach by the recipient, whereas the perception of the peripheral model is based on the feeling coming from the memory. In case of peripheral type the social attitude is changed not in the result of detailed analyses but in the result of surface deduction. It should be mentioned that teenagers equally use both models for processing information. The first model is easier for them: at this age their emotional background is in the process of transformations and the voice heard in the serial which they formerly heard at a pleasant moment may develop a positive social attitude towards the given character. On the other hand, central processing takes place as at this age the teenager tries to give meaning to everything and willingly or unwillingly starts analyzing the serial. This is accounted for by the teenagers’ evidence about the fact that they frequently discuss this or that situation or the behavior of a certain character.

Armenian soap operas also develop social attitudes with the help of systematic information processing. In this case the following steps taken by media are distinguished:

1. attraction of attention,
2. perception of the message,
3. agreement with the message,
4. memorization of the message,
5. behavior.

The TV serial “Banakum” (“In the Army”)^{vi} has the largest audience among teenagers, it has been watched by 30.80 percent of the respondents. Now it has been renamed and is called “Kaghakum” (“In the City”).



We have considered this serial not only because of the fact that it is very popular with teenagers but also because of the fact that it is targeted at them as at the end of adolescence young men are recruited and we can say that they are considered to be target audience of the serial.

Let us start with the soundtrack of the serial which is played at the beginning of each episode, partly at the end as well and is best remembered by the teenagers. The teenagers assured that the song is quite attractive, encouraging and it seems as if it calls to the screen. The music is simple; easily comprehensible, is accompanied with equally simple words, and is performed with an imposing tone. In the song the day of being recruited to the Army is a long-expected one and signals the beginning of a new life, however, the years spent in the Army are also described as difficult and the ways to overcome the difficulties are the happy moments and jokes.

Thus, a respective social attitude is formed towards the soldier: he is brave, courageous, and fair, his homeland is proud of him and is defended by his soldiers. The scenes accompanying the song are mainly objects of military life: military clothes, weapons, shoulder straps, agenda, etc. Some episodes from maneuvers are shown where soldiers are cheerful and the existence of these positive emotions naturally contributes to the development of positive social attitude towards military life and the Army. The continual technique of showing frames is very interesting. The frame comes up and stops at a certain object, and then the frame opens in the context of another scene where the same object is present. During the song (less than 1.5 minutes) this technique is repeated for 9 times. It creates a feeling of interconnection and identity which is very important for creating an image of strongly structured Army providing equal opportunities.

The combination of the music, tone, choice of words and scenes accompanying the music allows concluding that in spite of its simplicity, the soundtrack solves a number of problems: it relieves the aggressive disposition of young men towards the army, prepares them for easy, cheerful military service, inspires them and develops positive social attitude towards the army.

Generally the objective of the producers of the serial to advocate the principle of equality in the army is obvious in the TV serial "Banakum" ("In the Army"). A lot of episodes have been made for the same reason, for example the officer is being persuaded to grant privileges to one of the soldiers but he naturally does not give way to temptation neither is he afraid of the threats. Except for the boy and his friends, everybody, even his fellow soldier is against him. The soldier who tries to make an exhibition of himself is severely made fun of.

But in some episodes the relations between soldiers are quite different. In some episodes a clear inequality is evident, for example some soldiers feel superior to others, their opinion is accepted by the majority, and they can make others work, they can send them to any place whereas nobody else has the

privilege of send them anywhere. “It seems to you that Melo must pay no attention to what you’re doing»,- honestly resents the “authority-soldier”. The underlying message is clear: Melo has the right to control others’ behavior, to forgive or not to forgive the newly recruited soldier. The “Authority-soldiers”, for instance, have the right to take the meal out of the canteen and eat it in the military quarters. In some cases, the officer does not allow them to take out the meal, but such cases are presented as unique incidents, and the person in charge of the canteen makes an excuse for not letting them take out the meal. The friend is also sure that he can take out the meal for the soldier but the officer watches them and prevents him. In this case they fail to take the meal out but the general implication is such that there are certain people in the army who can easily “solve problems”. This remark is confirmed my several characters who during their military service try to become a “commander”, gain authority and privileges. The concept of being or not being an alien is present throughout the whole serial. Even friends who have made mistakes become aliens (sometimes temporarily) and vulnerable for others. Such a situation is depicted in one of the episodes of the serial of 29. 05 2012.

Minas who is considered to be authority in the army has to punish Varuzh who is considered to be an authority as well as he has challenged the “common principle”. Of course, it is obvious that this principle is not the principle of the Armenian Army; it is determined by these authorities.

The authorities as a rule (and this concerns all the Armenian TV serials) are presented in the serial as fair-minded people but it is obvious that in this case we deal with inequality. This idea fully contradicts the objective of the producers of the serial, nevertheless there is a clear message coming from the screen. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is considered to be something natural which expressing the reality is reproduced and culturally grounded in real life.

This notion is also present in the studies of foreign researchers. For instance, Luiza Saffhil notes that “although the category of identity is not fully adequate for soap operas, the audience may compare themselves with the characters of the soap operas as such films often seem quite real to the viewers”.^{vii}

Misunderstandings and aggression are the natural continuation of the above-mentioned reality and its demonstration is very dangerous for the teenager’s mentality and social behavior. The existence of such scenes is especially dangerous on the background of army life as it can develop a disposition of aggressive behavior among teenagers shortly before getting enlisted to the army.

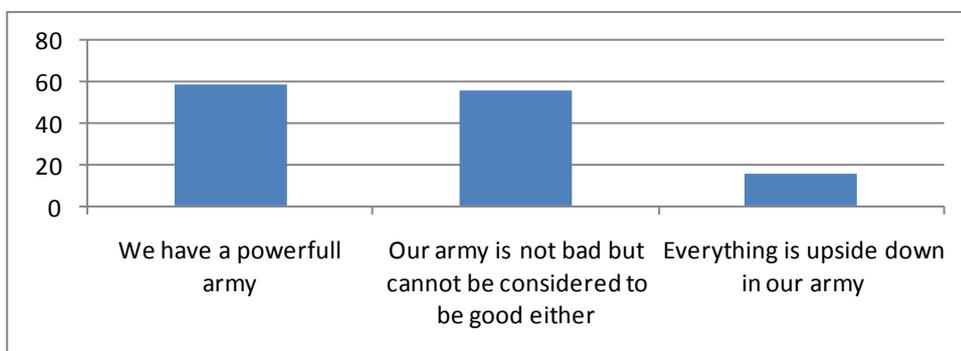
In the TV serial “Banakum” (“In the Army”) the demonstration of aggressive characters, behavior and situations is frequently introduced. Scenes containing aggression are present in almost every episode (3-5 scenes). Out of 15 authority figures 5 figures constantly demonstrate aggressive behavior including both positive and negative characters. The other ten characters are calmer and demonstrate aggressive

behavior only in certain situations. It is interesting that the proportion of negative and positive characters is the same (note that only the more vivid characters are concerned), 10 and 5 respectively, but this coincidence is only numerical. The 3 characters constantly demonstrating aggressive behavior are introduced in quite a positive context, they are strong and self-confident figures and will surely serve as role models for teenagers.

Thus, in the episode of 17. 05. 2012 the word “to beat” is repeated 8 times which is accompanied by the scenes of the fight of Varuzh and Hakobyan where the latter takes a knife out of his pocket and pushes it on Varuzh’s throat.

Incidentally, in the serial humorous characters are more than serious ones. 10 of most vivid characters are humorous whereas the number of serious characters is 8. These figures also present a certain image of the army and can have a double impact: to prepare teenagers for easy military life and at the same time reduce the more serious and responsible approach to the army.

The humorous episodes perhaps have the objective of reducing the atmosphere of unjustified fear among Armenian society towards the army and counteract the groundless and short-sighted information flows which try to form an atmosphere of fear towards the Armenian army. This is also accounted for by our surveys.



The vast majority of teenagers watching the series “Banakum” (“In the Army”) tends to serve in the Armenian Army but 20,75 per cent states that they would prefer to be recruited to a place not far from home. 56,27 per cent think that our army is not bad but cannot be considered to be good either. 18,28 per cent has chosen the variant “I will not serve or my brother will not serve in the Army.”



Humorous episodes sometimes exceed the norm turning into cynicism. It is demonstrated in various forms: one of the characters has to go and kiss one of the funny soldiers whom he doesn't like at his fellow soldier's request every time because he has lost the bet. This makes him make humorous, cynical remarks concerning his sexual orientation, creating funny scenes. The abundance of such scenes (3-5 scenes in each episode) is manifested in the real Army sometimes they complain that the recruits pretend to be the characters from the serial forgetting about the seriousness and strict discipline of the military life.

The episodes introducing discipline and orders for maintaining order are also abundant but their number is much fewer than the humorous ones being repeated once a few episodes with no regular periodicity. In this respect it is important to note that the most disciplined soldier of the serial is a Russian-speaking young man who served in the Russian Army. We can conclude that the existing stereotype about the disciplined Russian Army in the Armenian information sphere is reproduced here as well and harms the reputation of the Armenian Army. The Russian-speaking soldier is strong-willed, fair-minded and friendly, he is ready to help his friends and serve his homeland.

The military life is presented as very clean and tidy in the serial. Once in a few episodes scenes and conversations concerning cleaning and maintaining personal hygiene are shown.

As in real army life there are a lot of arguments about maintaining the area of the army clean the way of the introduction of such episodes is very important. The soldiers in the serial carry out cleaning operations without complaint but none of the so-called "authority soldiers" happened to tidy or clean the area. Moreover, in some cases even after getting an order from the officer they don't carry out the command. "I don't think Hrach can peel potatoes", wonders one of the soldiers who performs the officer's order alone. The contradiction is very interesting: on the one hand the "authority soldiers" condemn the soldier who doesn't carry out the order; on the other hand they do not appear to carry out any order themselves and in the serial very often there appear soldiers who perform some work instead of others. In the first case the producers of the serial try to intentionally advocate equality, in the second case the approach existing in society is unintentionally reproduced.

A separate topic for discussion is the evening talks of the army life at their free time. When each of the soldiers is presented with his characteristic features, sometimes with his dreams and details of life outside the army as well as his longings. This part is usually the most emotional part of the serial which is often accompanied by sad music. From these talks the teenagers usually remember home-sickness which depending on the teenager's inner world and character can influence them differently. It is worth mentioning that these talks are usually followed by the sight of the moon which seems to signal the

change of the day. As the moon is usually depicted in the form of a full moon it can be associated with a longer period, the month thus symbolizing the soldier's anticipation for returning home.

No serial targeted at teenagers can be exempt from love stories. Three main characters of ladies are introduced in the army where 2 of them are humorous characters and one of them is more serious (here we talk about the love stories inside the army life, the number of current love stories is more). If we consider these relationships in terms of discrimination it should be noted that the character of the dressmaker lady who appears in the serial only for a short period is not correctly presented. She appears as a naive girl who is not serious, easily falls in love and fails to make decisions.

A discriminated approach is also observed in the relationship between the tearoom girl and "authority soldier" Melo who never misses any opportunity to offend the girl, whose love is expressed by violence, aggressive vocabulary, demonstration of false traditionalism.

The language of the serial is important as well as on the one hand it expresses the common vocabulary popular with our teenagers and young people, and on the other hand this vocabulary used by their favorite characters becomes more and more popular and common among them. Perhaps the existence of dialectal speech should be considered a positive fact in the serial. Firstly, the dialect is the wealth of our language and secondly, any manifestation of regional reality should be considered to be positive especially when nowadays the regional life is not introduced on TV in any way. However, it should be mentioned that literary language is presented in the serial very little, even in the speech of officers slang expressions predominate; especially certain characters (which are popular with teenagers) use excessively vulgar speech using a great number of vulgarisms.

Each topic discussed here can cause quite long analyses and become a topic for a separate article but the comprehensive study of the impact of TV serials urges us to a more generalized approach.

The second most popular TV serial with teenagers is the soap opera "**Dzhvar Aprust**" ("Hard Living"). If the potential audience of the previous serial could be considered to be mainly teenagers as it was humorous, easy to watch and the interest of this age group was quite natural, in this case the attraction of teenagers to this serial is rather difficult to explain. As the serial presents a long chain of hardships, sufferings, indefiniteness, depression, aggressive behavior which at first sight should not be attractive for teenagers. Some teenagers claim that they are attracted by the existence of young actors in the serial whose involvement was quite big especially during the initial period of the serial: each episode presented 2-5 scenes showing their routine, relationships, etc.

The scenes trying to resolve various intertwined relations predominate in the serial: 5-8 conversations out of 15-17 in each episode occur in a bad-tempered and irritated manner. Meanwhile, they occur not only in cases of misunderstandings but also in cases of everyday conversations.

Nearly in all the episodes (in some episodes for 3-5 times) a threat is uttered which is expressed by using rude words such as “I will give you a beating”, “I’ll beat you up”, “I’ll give you a slap in the face”, “I’ll blow you up”, etc. All these threats were uttered in 3 successive episodes^{viii}.

The natural continuation of the threats is the manifestations of physical and verbal aggression which are abundant in the serial as well (4-6 incidents in each episode). Physical aggression is usually expressed in forms of beating, fight, kidnapping, etc.

Areas of the application of verbal aggression are various: relationships between men and women, relationships between parents and children, company of friends or young people. Verbal aggression is more vividly expressed in the relations between men and women: the presentation of improper gender relations is typical of the serial. The woman who is devoted to her family, who has forgiven her husband’s betrayal and brought up his child born out of the wedlock and who is actually already a victim of verbal aggression is addressed by her husband as “dimwit” and is often subjected to physical violence. A much younger character whose behavior can be exemplary for the teenager talks about his former wife with explicit aggression calling her “schizophrenic”, “mad”, etc. Another more vulgar young man not only ignores the mother of his child, deprives her of all parental rights but also addresses her with expressions which are beyond any limit of morality. It is needless to say that the use of such words and behavior may form an improper attitude among teenagers towards women even if a negative woman character is concerned. Especially as the above-mentioned men are well-established, handsome, loved and are respected by friends. What else does the teenager need?

There is also a demonstration of verbal aggression addressed at men. The woman tries to humiliate the man devoted to her calling him backboneless, weak-willed and wonders why she paid attention to such a man, and prompts him to dishonest deeds which eventually lead to the man’s frustration. The man is conscious of the situation, does not trust the woman but can do nothing with his feelings and silently obeys her. In this case too the danger of imitating the social behavior is present as here we deal with a fatal, beloved woman who can cause the destruction of men. And for a teenager girl it is of primary importance to be a fatal, beloved woman.

Verbal aggression is also demonstrated in relations between parents and children. In particular one of the characters constantly offends his mother depriving her of the right to her personal life, humiliating her and giving orders. Sometimes the character is subjected to verbal aggression by the parent too.

As far as the manifestation of verbal aggression in the relations between friends are concerned we must note that they are not few either (their number is changed from time to time due to the changes made in the plot). At first the main character of the serial is subjected to verbal aggression by

her fellow students (she is called “slattern”), then by the family of the young man she is in love with as a member of a poor family, then by her fellow prisoners. The sick girl who was brought up in an orphanage is also subjected to verbal aggression by friends. Her friend always insults her, emphasizing that she has no family, makes fun of her naivety. In this case we deal with the reproduction of a stereotype existing in our social and cultural reality. Poor people are not respected, they are associated with dirtiness, and socially well off people tend to become related to families with the same social status, the girl brought up in an orphanage can be mocked. Together with these stereotypes a certain social attitude is formed that people who are underprivileged or brought up in an orphanage are unhappy and should be made fun of.

Here we discussed certain aspects of relations existing in the families presented in the serial but in general it is very important to define what kind of family is depicted on the screen with its structure and values and what model of a modern family the serial introduces to the Armenian teenager.

The serial “Dzhvar Aprust” (“Hard Living”) includes 12 families 6 of which are not full families. The married couples are divorced or widowed. The other 50% live together but our analysis reveals a sad picture. In one of the families the spouses are together simply because the mother of the family has no other way and has to tolerate her husband’s violence and neglect. In 2 other young families quarrels and split-ups are constant and in 2 other families one of the spouses is in love with another person. And only 3 families out of these 12 ones (not primary but, secondary families) where the married couples live in harmony. Nearly all the families are characterized with vividly aggressive behavior which is expressed in wife-husband and parent-child relations. 9 families out of the above-mentioned 12 families have grown-up children. In 4 of these families parent-child relations are based on mutual respect whereas in other 5 cases there exist quarrelsome, aggressive relations.^{ix}

If in the case of family relations the serial develops mainly a negative stereotype, in the case of relations between friends the developed attitude is certainly positive as the characters of friends are always together, ready to help one another.

There a great number of lies and intrigues (once or twice in each episode). But they are usually easily revealed and form a social attitude that such lies are easily discovered.

During the whole serial the vast majority of the characters are in despair, both the positive and negative ones, all of them. In each episode one can find 4-6 despaired scenes 1-2 of which are accompanied with cry.

In spite of the fact that in some cases young characters use slang words, in general in the serial “Dzhvar Aprust” (“Hard Living”) the language is more literary than in “Banakum” (“In the Army”) and “Kargin Serial” (“Proper Serial”). The vast majority of the characters have got higher education. Even in

bad financial conditions the issue of getting proper education is a primary goal for the main character and her mother and they do their best to find the money necessary for her education.

Relations between friends and young people as well as man-woman, parent-child relations are presented in the serial called “Kargin Serial” (“Proper Serial”) which is the third most popular serial with teenagers after “Banakum” (“In the Army”) and “Dzhvar Aprust”(“Hard Living”). The characters of the serial unlike those of the other two serials are intentionally well-marked with humorous scenes. The above-mentioned relations define the good and the bad, the modern and the backward, the right and the wrong and all these things are eventually based on the money. This idea is present in all the stories of “Kargin Serial” (“Proper Serial”).

Possession of money dictates a special range of attitude and behavioral patterns and a certain way of life. Thus, the two main characters of the serial Vardan and Arkadi (Adik), the first of whom is rich and the other earns little, appear in the serial with the nicknames “king” and “slave” respectively. And Adik accepts his status of being a “slave”. He is frequently subjected to physical and verbal aggression and has low self-esteem. The two brothers are contrasted in everything. Vardan is always rude, impolite, speaks distorted Armenian, has low level of education, at the same time he is self-confident and all the girls fall in love with him. Adik who is polite, educated, speaks literally, always has to yield and give in for the sake of money. He is not loved by women, even his wife; the mother of his child turned him out of the house. Good life is associated with the properties Vardan possesses and once again confirms that in order to be rich one doesn’t need to be intelligent and educated. Another rich character is Vardan’s neighbor who is not quite civilized and his vulgar words are unpleasant even for the serial’s main characters highlighted by their cynicism. In the same episode Vardan orders Adik to prepare a luxurious dinner to celebrate his wife’s April 7. At the end of the dinner he gives Adik 80 000 AMD for the “serviette” which he pronounces wrongly. After Vardan’s departure Adik remarks bitterly, “How can you pay 80 000 AMD for a thing whose spelling you don’t even know?” Adik reaffirms that education and literacy cannot guarantee prosperous mode of living. The real prototypes of Vardan’s character can be found in Armenia reality. The message is clear. The producers of the serial talk about the unfair, faulty aspects of society but if we consider the issue in terms of media impact the characters may be exemplary and attractive for the teenager. Poor and miserable Adik “forgets about everything”^x at the sight of money. His only expectation from life is “we live our lives only once, why not eat as much barbecue as we can one day.”^{xi}

The fact that the youngest character of the serial Aramik who is a teenager as well likes his uncle Vardan (and in cases of necessity quotes his words) and not his father points to the fact that Vardan is a quite likeable character for teenagers. Thus, on April 7 Aramik goes to the restaurant with his girl-

friend. The girl-friend doubts they will be let in as they are schoolchildren. Vardan is an authority for Aramik and he repeats his uncle's words "thanks to money everything is possible."

The typical characters of the serial are Halal and Zual (who personify representatives of underworld leaders). Their attitude towards different phenomena is extreme and reproduces the mentality of the certain layer of our society (of course, partly exaggerated). Thus, Halal and Zual propose a toast on April 7 praising women with high-flown and grandiloquent words.^{xii} At that moment a woman comes up to them. Let's introduce the talk between the two friends and the woman.

-Sis, why did you come and cast your anchor here?

-I'm waiting for a person.

-Please, clear out!

-You, creeps,- shouts the woman and runs away.

-The creep is your aunt,- they answer throwing the vodka glass at her. The woman shrieks... Halal and Zual continue their toast with the same calmness "...and we should take on our shoulders the cares of these gentle creatures..." Here we see evidence of verbal aggression accompanied by physical aggression. The situation is taken from Armenian reality. The woman is praised in toasts but in real life she is subjected to rude and violent treatment.

With regard to the demonstration of relations between relatives the serials brings about a completely new, strange and even unacceptable norms and mentality. Generally the values dominating in the families of the serials are not always identical with the real values. It is clear that such projects are taken from similar Western projects which are generally aimed at making fun of the characters they embody, but unfortunately their impact on the behavior and mentality of children cannot be denied. Simply because of the fact that these characters are embodied by the actors who are very popular with teenagers and in everyday speech that imitate these characters, quote them, use their manners and undoubtedly their way of thinking as well.

In the family model introduced in "Kargin Serial" ("Proper Serial") the children (unlike Armenian families where children adore their parents) don't like their parents, avoid them in every possible way, the grandchild considers it to be a severe punishment to have to deal with his grandmother.

Parent-child relations are extremely simplified and deprived of any sense. The serial and the products associated with it encourage a surface treatment towards people and their values, whereas they must be exciting and precious in personal relations. Theoreticians detect a clear link between advertising and serials considering that both promote and spread certain goods and mode of life all over the world.

^{xiii} The mode of life promoted by Armenian serials leads to the materialization of social values.

In “Kargin Serial” (“Proper Serial”) the mother loves her richer son more. Kind treatment is not appreciated here, unselfish motherly or filial love is never spoken of, the mother demands valuable gifts from her sons. In one of the episodes the mother finds a picture in her belongings which was painted by Adik when he was a schoolboy and presented to his mother. She shows the picture to Adik saying,

-On every Mother’s Day you presented me such gifts when you left school you ran out of you presents as well.

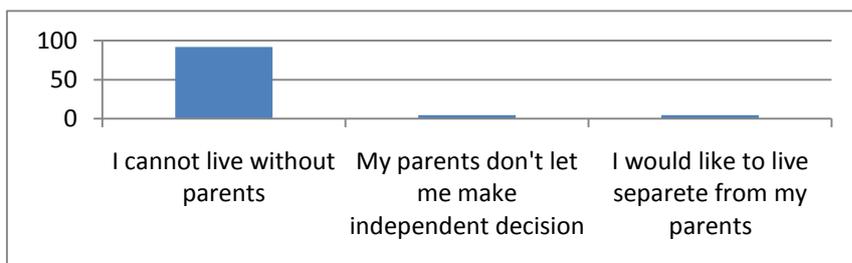
-But it isn’t so, Mummy, during student years I continued painting such pictures and presenting them to you but you used to take them and rip them up saying that I was old enough to start giving more valuable presents.

-And did you follow my advice? Since leaving school you have never bought and presented me anything worthy.

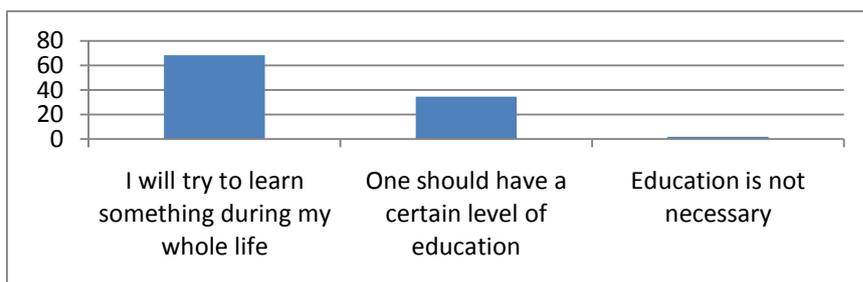
-Mummy, but what can I do when I am much better at painting than at making money....

The mother’s words sound true and persuasive and Adik feels guilty. Parent-child relations are based on these values in the serial and this can contribute to the development of an anti-social attitude and set rules for wrong behavior.

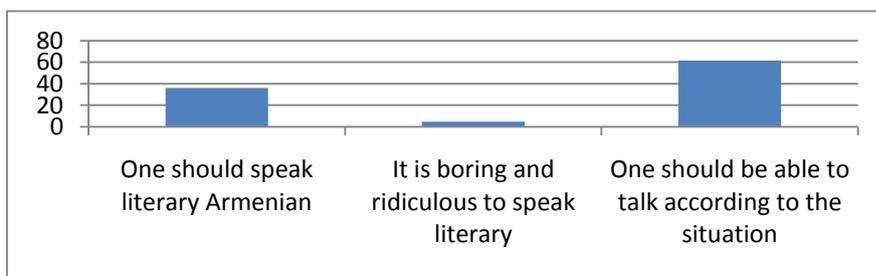
Any media product made in any society embodies the values of the given society. However, the surveys we have carried out among teenagers prove that in Armenian reality the parent-child-relatives relations are not structured in the same way. 91,67 of the respondents who watch “Kargin Serial” (“Proper Serial”) state that they cannot live without parents.



The attitude of teenagers towards education and knowledge is the following: the majority of them, 68,32 per cent mentions that they have always learnt something during their whole life, 34, 56 per cent has chosen “One should have a certain level of education” and only 1,74 per cent thinks that education is not necessary.



Special attention should be paid to the clothes of the serial's characters. Vardan wears only sports outfit (even when visiting a restaurant where a special dress code is required) but it does not mean that he advocates healthy lifestyle. In this case the sports outfit expresses Vardan's way of thinking and way of living. Halal and Zulal are always dressed in black which is the expression of their inner world. Adik's clothes are simply funny. The mother of the family and her boyfriend are dressed in classical style and are presented as negative characters. The process of identifying the messages coming from the screen and development of social attitude towards the phenomena presented in the serials is certainly conditioned by a number of factors and it is difficult to claim that the developed attitudes mainly correspond to the messages conveyed by the serials. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the manners and speech of the serials have entered our society and are widely used by teenagers. We can simply state that 61, 68 per cent think that one should be able to talk according to the situation. 36,21 per cent have chosen the option "One should speak literary Armenian".



We think that it is high time that Armenian theoretical and journalistic elite treated the serial culture not as a secondary, worthless phenomenon worth ignorance and neglect but tried to understand the power of this media product and used it resourcefully.

Epilogue

Thus, nowadays a teenager gets messages from TV mainly with negative content: obvious lack of literary Armenian, a distorted image of a parent, family, school, and intelligentsia, little competent propaganda of homeland and Armenianism, and no distinct attitude towards good and evil.

Meanwhile, the outcomes of our research, at least in terms of some claims, are not so pessimistic. According to the data of that survey, an Armenian teenager loves his homeland, parents, relatives, and school; he has a positive attitude towards army, etc.

It turns out that the teenager has some values (positive), which, however, are not put in public circulation. In fact, while socializing with his peers, he must communicate a message, which is comprehensible and acceptable both in its language and content. Media messages, irrespective of social status, level of literacy, and place of residence, are available to every Armenian teenager, who is able to define a common and intelligible way of thinking and manners.

NOTES

ⁱ Maurin, Louis, (2003), “La télévision, média de masse, occupe une place de plus en plus importante dans la société. Peu ou prou, tout le monde regarde la télé, mais des distinctions persistent”, Alternatives Economiques, n° 220 – décembre, http://www.alternatives-economiques.fr/la-societe-de-la-tele_fr_art_175_19210.html.

ⁱⁱ Саффи́л, Луиза, Подростки- зрители мыльных опер, Массовая культура. современные западные исследования - Сборник статей - Часть I, www.fedy-diary.ru/html/112010/021/2010-02a.html,

ⁱⁱⁱ Brunson, Charlotte, (2005), “Writing about Soap Opera”, edited by Len Masterman, Taylor & Francis e-Library, Television Mythologies: Stars, shows & signs, p.77

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid, p. 78.

^{vi} <http://hy.wikipedia.org/wiki/Բսմալմուհի>:

^{vii} Саффи́л, Луиза, Подростки- зрители мыльных опер, Массовая культура. современные западные исследования - Сборник статей - Часть I, www.fedy-diary.ru/html/112010/021/2010-02a.html.

^{viii} Episodes 423, 424, 425.

^{ix} See the data of a prior period

^x Kargin Serial 4, Episode 8.

^{xi} Ibid, Episode 6.

^{xii} Ibid, Episode 8.

^{xiii} Miller, Daniel, (2001) “The consumption of soap opera”, edited by Robert C. Alen, To be continued... soap operas around the world, Taylor & Francis e-Library, p. 21.

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Summary

Television and particularly TV series are being widely consumed by Armenian teenagers. They greatly influence the teenager's formation as an individual, formulate certain social standpoints, and determine certain behavior. Nowadays a teenager gets messages from TV mainly with negative content: obvious lack of literary language, a distorted image of a parent, family, school, and intelligentsia, and no distinct attitude towards good and evil. These media messages, irrespective of social status, level of education, and place of residence, define a common and intelligible way of thinking and manners acceptable by teenagers in the scope of which they try to self-realize in daily routine.

Ամփոփում

Հեռուստատեսությունը և հատկապես հեռուստասերիալները լայն սպառում ունեն հայ դեռահասների շրջանում: Դրանք մեծապես ազդում են դեռահասի, իբրև անհատի, կազմավորման վրա, ձևավորում են որոշակի սոցիալական դիրքորոշումներ և պայմանավորում որոշակի վարք: Էկրանից այսօր դեռահասը ստանում է առավելապես բացասական համատեքստով հաղորդագրություններ՝ ակնհայտ է գրական լեզվի պակասը, առկա է ծնողի, ընտանիքի, դպրոցի ու մտավորականի խեղված կերպար, չկա լավի և վատի հանդեպ հստակ վերաբերմունք: Այս մեդիահաղորդագրությունները, անկախ սոցիալական դիրքից, կրթական մակարդակից, բնակության վայրից սահմանում են դեռահասների կողմից ընդունելի և հասկանալի մտածելակերպ և վարքականոններ, որոնց շրջանակներում էլ նրանք փորձում են ինքնադրսևորվել առօրյայում:

Резюме

Телевидение и особенно сериалы пользуются большим спросом у армянских подростков. Они сильно влияют на становление личности подростков, формируют определенную социальную позицию и обуславливают определенное поведение. В настоящее время подросток с экрана телевизора получает в основном негативную информацию, в которой ощущается явный недостаток литературного армянского языка, присутствует искаженный образ родителей, семьи, школы и интеллигенции, мало грамотной пропаганды родины и армянских ценностей, нет четкого отношения к хорошему и плохому. Эта медиаинформация доступна всем подросткам, независимо от их социального статуса, уровня образованности, места жительства, и они в состоянии определить единый, понятный всем менталитет и правила поведения, в рамках которых они пытаются проявлять себя в повседневной жизни.

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