Feature Film Cinematography and its Impact on Formation of Parenthood Affirmations in Young Students

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Abstract—The relevance of parental affirmations formation among young people is associated with decline in parenthood importance and unsatisfactory level of parental competence in children's upbringing. The study's goal was to test the cinematherapy program aimed at developing ideas about the parental position and forming of parental attitudes in young students entering adulthood. The study used the methods of observation, content analysis, focus groups and projective method (projective drawing). The program included viewing and subsequent discussion by participants of eight feature films. The sample consisted of 18 students aged 20-21. The results show a high emotional involvement of the participants, their active orientation in the events and actions of film characters, a significant expansion of ideas about parenthood and certain shifts in self-consciousness reflected in the parenthood attitude revision, building a life perspective inclusive of parenthood as a significant source of personal growth and acceptance of responsibility. Psychological conditions for the efficiency of the developed cinematherapy program are emotional empathy and 'character's fate' tracing in a comparative reflection of their own experience of a parent-child relationship, decentration while discussing the characters' actions, and symbolic generalization of the emotional experience at the close of each session.

Keywords—cinematherapy; parenthood; parental position and affirmations; focus-groups; sympathy with 'character's fate'.

I. INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the study is determined by the growing tendency to reduce the importance of parenthood and the level of young people psychological and pedagogical competence against the background of the formation of ideas about parenthood as a threat to self-realization and psychological well-being [1,2,3,4]. In addition to family experience, cinematography plays a significant role in the formation of parental affirmations. It has not yet been fully explored as a resource potential for solving the problem of youth self-determination in relation to family and parenthood. Low level of readiness for modern youth parenthood; ideas on parenthood as an indicative basis of parenting; disharmony of

ideas about future parenthood should serve as the base for psychological impact aimed at their harmonization. One of the promising forms of such an impact will be cinematherapy. Studies have shown that cinematherapy is very effective in resolving family problems, especially for young people [5,6,7].

The *purpose of the study* was to test the cinematherapy program aimed at developing ideas about the parental position and child-parent relations and forming parental affirmations in young students entering adulthood.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methods: observation, content analysis, focus groups and projective method (projective drawing). The program included watching and subsequent discussion by the group work participants of eight specially selected local and foreign feature films, the content of which was related to parenthood and parent-child relations. The selection criteria were the high artistic level and the representation of the 'effective' and destructive behavior of the parents. After each viewing, during a group discussion, theses were formulated reflecting the film's main meaning (focus groups). The participants had the opportunity to discuss the film events and the actions of the characters and demonstrate their position in a collision with other points of view. At the end of each session, participants were invited to express the main idea of the film in a form of a drawing or a motto. The study was conducted as a part of the 'Psychology of Parenthood' course in accordance with the curriculum of Lomonosov Moscow State University Faculty of Psychology. Eighteen students of the faculty aged 20-21 who did not study the psychology of family and parenthood in other training courses and did not have experience of their own parenting acted as participants. The sample consisted of 15 girls and 3 boys. Participants presented their impressions of the film and subsequent discussion in the form of a written report. The obtained descriptions were subjected to content analysis. The results allow to determine the effect of the psychological impact of viewing and discussion.

Results. Figure 1 shows the main categories of respondents' statements reflecting the program impact. The largest share of statements (64.11%) concerned expansion of ideas about parenting and the system of parent-child relations. Visualization of the film events and actions of the characters, created by vivid artistic images, opens up the possibility of emotional empathy and tracing the long-term consequences of parental action. It creates the background for highlighting cause-and-effects; revision of own affirmations as a result of the empathy mechanism, sympathy for the favorite character; convincing conclusions, enriching ideas about the means of parenting, comparing the used strategies. The subsequent discussion of the film in focus groups provides the possibility of decentration, as the ability to correlate various judgments and assessments of actions, motives, affirmations and values of the characters expressed by the group members.
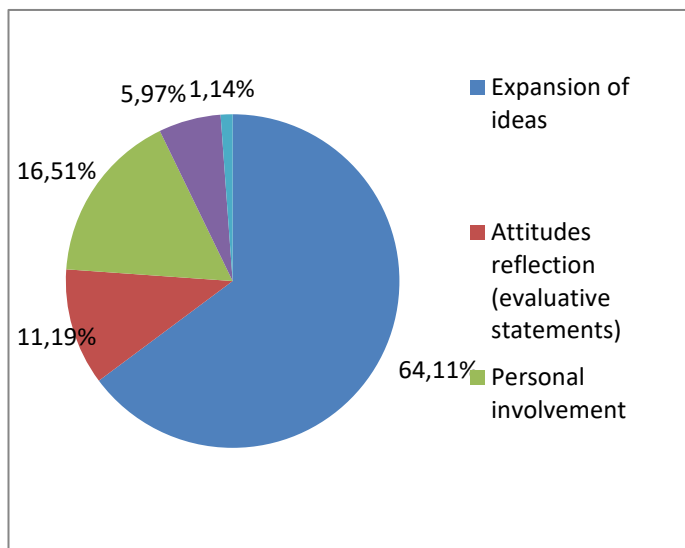

Fig. 1. Categories of participants' statements obtained by content analysis

Next frequent statement category was personal involvement (16,51%), expressed as an interest and emotional involvement in watching and discussing the film. In 11.19% of cases, the statements concern the expression of a personal attitude to the unfolding events and actions of the characters. The participants had the opportunity to express this attitude during discussion. It helped them not only realize their own viewpoint regarding parenthood, but also change their attitude to parenthood and take a reasonable position in assessing the parenting style implemented by the film characters.

The results of the content analysis of the participants' comments on their impressions of watching during subsequent discussion indicate their personal involvement in the analysis of the 'character's fate' (P. Y. Galperin) (16.51%). They become not just passive viewers, accepting certain judgments and actions of the film characters. The emotional response to what is happening encourages participants to actively get involved in the events and relationships of the characters evidenced by extensive discussions in which we see the desire to substantiate their attitude, declaration of their own value priorities that determine the personal position of the author,

expression of sympathy for the characters and taking on the conditions in which the characters have to act. By the presence or absence of such internal work, the study participants significantly differ (t-criterion = 0.930; p = 0.000).

In few events (5.97%), significant personal transformations were recorded, consisting in a review of participants' attitude towards parenthood, the transformation of life prospects and the discovery of parenthood as a possible sphere of self-realization.

The results of the psychological impact analysis effect in terms of expanding ideas about parenthood as a discovery of something new due to watching and discussing films are presented in Table 1. (It shows the distribution of statements categories in response to the question what was new that the respondent discovered during the work of the group).

TABLE I. DISTRIBUTION OF STATEMENTS IN SELF-REPORTS CATEGORIES CHARACTERIZING THE PHENOMENON OF PARENTHOOD AND PARENTING

Statements category	Frequency of occurrence %
Family relationship	23,10
Parents' personal traits	10
Means of upbringing	9,31
Parental functions	6,66
Parents' efforts	6,55
Consequences of parents' actions	6,55
Children's behavior	5,97
Children's emotional experiences	5,74
Parental position	5,40
Parenting style	4,13
Form of parenting implementation	3,44
Parental value priorities	3,33
Parenthood motivation	2,64
Readiness for parenthood	2,41
Role of marital relations	1,14
Lifestyle changes	1,14
Family conflict	0,68

Recreating the character's story in the form of empathy for his or her fate allows the viewer to feel and realize the psychological conflict in a certain vein set by the film creator while preserving, nevertheless, the wide range of possibilities for personal comprehension and interpretation of the film. We were faced with the projection phenomenon, when a film actualizes the viewer's awareness of his own life situation, and in some cases, there was a change in the previous attitude towards child-parent relations and the parental role. An important revelation for several participants (5.40%) was a specific social position and parent role as responsibility for the development and well-being of the child. 'I understood that the parent is first and foremost … the parent, not the friend' - S.E.; 'I gathered that it is necessary to observe social roles in the family, if a parent cannot be an adult, the child becomes an adult. It can easily be harmful to him' - M.A.; 'It was a discovery for me that a parent (a good one) is not always an equal friend' - B.M.; 'It was a discovery for me that you should not be afraid that your children hate you, but you can cross their desires if it's good for them' - M.B.; 'To be parents means to be able not only to be a friend to your children, but also to be able to say no, prohibit, and sometimes scold' - L.N.

The realization that the parent bears the responsibility for the life and well-being of the child leads to an understanding of the special rights that he has: 'A parent is not the one who has given birth, but the one who assumes the responsibility' - S.E.; 'The vision of parental authority was a discovery for me' - S.A.; 'Your one-second decisions, actions, words define what children will become', 'children, in the end, are aware of the parental role, understand why parents act one way or another and accept their choice' - B.A.; 'It is in the interests of the child, that the parent is a grown-up, attentive and responsible person' - S.D.

Much attention was paid to parental love and the conditions of its occurrence. 'It was a discovery for me that with every child, happiness multiplies' - S.A.; 'I admire the Nadezhda's exorbitant spirit and her boundless love for her children expressed in self-sacrifice and self-denial' - M.A.; 'I concluded for myself that love is an action' - T.M.; 'True love is selfless' - N.S. The events presented in the films created the opportunity to raise the issue of the nature of parental love. During the discussion, many participants revised their views on the biological nature of motherly love, its initial pre-formation A heated discussion unfolded over the thesis that 'man can learn to love a child'.

The discovery for many participants was that parenting, like any other type of activity, requires serious efforts. The success of them depends on motivation, goals and means; the idea about the phenomenon of psychological readiness for parenthood arose: 'I liked it how the main characters gradually came from completely unprepared for parenting to this' - D.R.; 'I gathered that it is difficult to be a parent and that you need to learn all the time' - D.R.; 'I grew to believe that children is a really difficult thing' - S.L.; 'I saw how difficult it is for parents of these children to earn their trust and respect', 'to become a family requires a lot of mental work and patience, from both sides' - S.D.

The content of the films made it clear that family happiness does not develop by itself, but is the result of the active efforts of all family members. It is especially important in connection with the idealization tendency of parenthood widespread among young people (8; 9; 10). This discovery led to reflection on the motivation of parenting: 'To be honest, after watching this film, the new question for me was: what is the motivation for parenting? Before that, I didn't think much about the fact that in order to be a mom you need motivation' - M.V.

A large number of statements were related to the meaningful description of parental functions: 'Father protects his child from external threats' - S.E.; 'The following 'rule' has become a new one for me ... always stay close (with a child)' - D.R.; 'I liked the desire of the main character to understand the inner world of the ones she took care of, the willingness to speak with them on equal terms and accept them' - S.L.; 'A parent can give the child much more than just good manners and general principles of life. It is in his power to teach the child to think, draw conclusions, express himself, self-regulate, create something new. Alas, parents often forget about it and narrow their tasks down to caring for the child and to suppress his dangerous/immoral intentions' - P.D. At the same time, it should be noted that the attention was focused on the functions of education, training and psychological support. Problems associated with caring for a child remained on the periphery of the participants' consciousness, which makes the idea of parental functions incomplete.

Respondents associate parental priorities with self-sacrifice, love, and caring for children: 'Mother is ready to do anything for the sake of her children, she appreciates their love and care' - K.M.; 'The father's opportunity to step over his fears for the sake of his son was new to me' - T.M., 'You can deny yourself in many ways for the sake of your children, give all of yourself to them and this will bring real happiness' - S. D.

In the given feature films, various forms of parenthood were presented - single, multi-child, adoptive. The discovery of variability in parenthood by participants enlarged their understanding of the family and parenting: 'I honestly didn't even imagine that there are such families' - S.E.; 'Foster parenting is a true selfless giving-all-you've-got and a lot of love' - S.A.; 'The fact that you can give birth and raise 10 children was a shock for me!!!' - M.A.

To father the goals of parenthood has directed the orientation of the participants to the reflection on the means and consequences of upbringing, as well as on the style of family functioning: 'I made the conclusion about the importance of tolerance, acceptance and contact in the family for its integrity and cohesion', '....conclusion that the attitudes towards upbringing may differ, man can also teach children different things', 'it is important to hear your children and be honest with them' - M.A.; 'It was a discovery for me that trust builds on contact. That contact is necessary to shape trust, although it is not enough' - N.S.; 'Oddly enough, I learned a rather obvious thing - the need for an eye contact in the dialogue' - S.L.; 'I concluded that even if the parent knows that he loves his children, he needs to show it in ways that are understandable to the child' - L.N.; 'Do not decide for him or her, it's worth helping to understand why your decision should be useful' - S.D.; 'Love and care can achieve a lot'; 'I first saw clearly how disagreement in the family affect children and their behavior - it's terrible' - S.A.; 'This type of upbringing has a significant drawback (1.1.15): children raised in such a family might become hyper-responsible, too serious and might lose their love of freedom, childish spontaneity and joyfulness' - S.S.

Peculiarities of children development and behavior are relatively rarely mentioned by respondents. As a rule, they are mentioned in the context of child-parent confrontation: 'How can a girl in her teens not understand the feelings of others!' - K.M., 'Apparently, it is not a matter of beliefs as such, but that behavior and declared views serve as a way to fight or attract attention' - S.A.

Using the content analysis, the categories of statements were identified, which testified to a transformation in the participants' self-awareness: reconsideration of their position, building a life perspective, acceptance of responsibility, personal growth and recognition of parenthood as a source of personal growth (Fig. 2).

First of all, shall we note that a change in attitudes towards parenthood is associated with turning to one's own family experience (42% of opinions). It can be assessed as positive and negative, or can simply become the basis for reflecting on the meaning and content of parenthood.
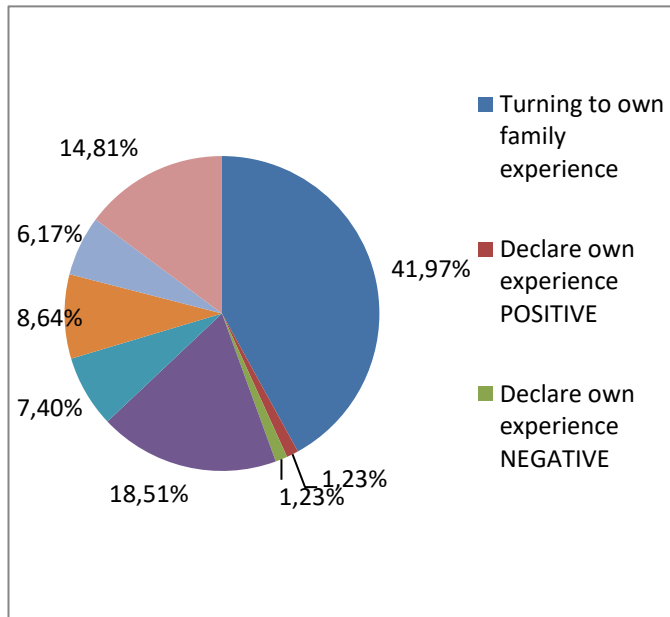

Fig.2. Categories of statements reflecting transformation in the self-awareness of group members

A comparative analysis of the categories convincingly indicates that the developed cinematherapy program turned out to be quite effective for reconsidering of the position (18.51%), recognizing the need for taking responsibility (8.64%), and making adjustments to the life prospects (7.4%) of personal growth (6.17%) and recognition of parenthood as a source of personal growth (14.82): 'I made a conclusion for myself about the importance of family relationships for full life and about the value of responsibility for becoming a person and personal growth', 'conclusion about the possible importance and fruitfulness of such type of self-realization as parenthood' - M.A.; 'It is not scary to be unprepared for becoming a parent if you are ready to develop in this regard' - S.L.; '...conclusion that children grow up along with their parents, and sometimes children raise their parents, showing them something new, something that they had not noticed before' - S.S.; '...conclusion that the decision to become a parent must be taken independently and balanced', 'it is important to think not only about how you feel with or without children, but about how they feel with you', 'the most valuable thing to invest in is the future of the child' - P.D.

The experience of using feature film cinematography in solving the issue of efficient parenthood forming attitudes testifies to the prospects of developing in this direction. The forms of implementing parenthood embodied in vivid artistic images, the characteristics of family relationship, and the means of child's upbringing evoke an emotional response from the participants, contributing to the activation of orientation and the need to realize one's own attitude towards parenthood. The subjective personality-biased position of the participants is realized as a unity of empathy-reflection-decentration and initiates the development of a young person self-consciousness. As a result, many participants recorded significant changes in attitudes regarding parenthood and internal position entailing the transformation of life prospects and plans for the implementation of the parental role.

III. CONCLUSIONS

1. Cinematherapy program aimed at the formation of accurate and harmonious ideas about parenthood of modern young people and the image of effective parenthood was developed and successfully tested.

2. The psychological conditions for the efficiency of the program are emotional empathy and tracing of the 'character's fate' in the comparative reflection on their own experience of a parent-child relationship, decentration during the discussion of the character's actions, generalization of the experience in a symbolic form at the end of each session.

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