Article

The Impact of the Cinema on Young People (on the Example of the Changes of the Representation of the Elderly)

Tina Kubrak [1]*

[1]   Laboratory of speech psychology and psycholinguistics, Institute of Psychology, Russian Academy of Sciences; 13, Yaroslavskaya, Moscow, 129366, Russia; kubrak.tina@gmail.com

*   Correspondence: kubrak.tina@gmail.com; Tel.: +7-926-378-2946

Abstract: The research is devoted to the acute problem of cinema influence on the young audience. With the continuous development of mass media, cinema is still one of the most popular leisure activities, remaining an influential tool on the picture of the world, values, stereotypes, behavior of viewers, etc. The paper studies the effects of the cinema on young viewers in relation to their ideas about the elderly. Using a psychosemantic technique that includes 25 scales designed specifically to identify the content of representation of older people, respondents evaluated their various characteristics before and after watching the film. It should be noted that after watching a film about the elderly, the respondents changed their representations of motivational and regulatory, cognitive and emotional characteristics of the older people. However, the changes were not similar in different groups of young people: students seemed to have more negative representation, graduate students' assessment, on the contrary, changed for better one. The discovered opposite effects of the cinema influence can be explained by a number of reasons starting from age, personal experience of the respondents, the formation of ideas to the special features of the film itself. In this regard, the contribution of individual factors to efficiency of the cinema impact and the prediction of its specific effects requires further study.

Keywords: psychology of cinema; influence of mass media; psychological influence of cinema; representations of youth; image of the elderly person

1. Introduction

Globalization and increasing of mass communication raise a problem of psychological influence of mass media and its consequences [1}. The picture of the world created by them defines people's vision of surrounding reality more and more and acquires the meaning and the value of the second reality [1-2].

This phenomenon is particularly important while studying such an influential mass medium as cinema. Films themselves create representations of reality, broadcast images, change cultural guidelines and stereotypes. For example, gender and ethnic stereotypes, images of occupations, ideas about family patterns and the world's justice, etc. [3-10, and etc.].

Nowadays cinema is not only a powerful means of mass media, but also one of the most common leisure activities. The cinema theatre attendance is growing, the possibilities of Internet views are expanding, the interest to TV series is rapidly increasing. Taking all of it into account, the issues concerning the impact of cinema on the youth's perception of the surrounding reality, which is most likely the subject to change, are of particular importance.

In the bulk of the scientific researches, a considerable number of works is devoted to the cinema's negative impact, but the potential for positive influence has been studied and used insufficiently. One of the striking examples is the science fiction movies, which clearly show what might await humanity in the near future, and provokes thinking about what can be done to avoid

the most pessimistic forecasts. Thus, after watching the movie "the Day After Tomorrow"(2004), viewers recognize their responsibility for the ecology of the Earth and the need to change consumer attitude to the Nature [11]. On the whole, the demonstration of feature films about climate problems increases the number of relevant requests on the Internet and discussions in the media [12]. Films can change previously formed social norms and values. The study of TV films of the 80-90's revealed the presence of stereotypes about older people as social outsiders [13], but adequate reflection on bias factors contributed to the growth of tolerance to them in the society. Watching TV shows with positive images of donors helps to make a decision about viewer's own donation [14].

The presented empirical study is aimed at obtaining new data on the effects of cinema on young viewers and identifying changes in their representation after watching the film.

In the process of developing the design of the work, the specific subject of the analysis   was clarified. The choice was determined by the relevance of the topic (for example, ideas about the scientist, ethnic stereotypes) and the presence of the corresponding film. Taking into account all the limitations and opportunities for achieving the goals of the experiment, as well as the increasing attention to the ageing problem with the dominance of negative stereotypes, the image of older people was chosen as a subject of the current study. The manifestation of age discrimination against older persons – ageism – is the younger's biased representation, low assessment of intellectual abilities, social activity and "usefulness" of such people for society

The film "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" (2011) was chosen to be shown to the respondents, the main characters were elderly people. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1412386/). The film was assumed to affect the young people's representation of the elderly, who found themselves in a variety of interesting situations. The respondents were supposed to look at main characters in a new way, to see that age was not an obstacle to having a full life. Thus, the hypothesis states that there is a connection between watching a positive film about the elderly and changes in the representation of older people in a positive way.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

A total of 70 individuals participated in the study. The group 1 contained 40 students of The State Academic University for Humanities (25% men and 75% women). The average age was 19 (M=19, standard deviation SD=2,4). The group 2 consisted of PhD students of Russian Academy of Sciences (47 % male and 53 % female). The average age was 24 (M=24, standard deviation SD=1.6).

2.2. Measures

The psychosemantic technique was developed to identify representation of the elderly, which included 25 evaluation scales [15]. The respondents assessed the importance of older people's characteristics on a 7-point scale. The modern youth was assessed according to the same characteristics for the comparative analysis.

The respondents also noted the frequency of watching movies ("every day" / "several times a week" / "several times a month" / "several times a year and less"), and evaluated the level of enjoying the film shown ("did not like" / "rather did not like than liked" / "rather liked than disliked" / "liked").

2.3. Procedure

The study was conducted in three stages: the respondents filled out the psychosemantic measure before watching the film, then immediately after viewing and again in 2 weeks. At the stage 3, only group 1 participated in the study.

2.4. Statistical Methods

To identify the influence of the film on the respondents ' representation, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used showing the presence of a shift in the assessment before and after

92   watching the film. The ratio of the impact efficiency with the frequency of watching movies was
93   revealed by the differences in the shifts in both groups with Mann-Whitney U test. The IBM SPSS
94   Statistics 20 statistical software package was used for data processing.

95   **3. Results and Discussion**

96   As a result of the preliminary data analysis of the first group (students), significant differences
97   in the representation of the older people before and immediately after watching the film were
98   obtained (Wilcoxon signed-rank test, p<0.05). However, the analysis of the entire sample showed no
99   significant differences. Two groups of respondents were compared, and there were differences in
100   their assessment of the elderly before watching the film (18 out of 25 scales, Mann-Whitney U test,
101   p<0.05). This result can be explained by the difference in age and personal characteristics of the
102   group members (students and postgraduates). Discovered additional factors of impact effectiveness
103   corrected hypothesis and formed new research tasks. In this regard, further analysis was carried out
104   separately for each of the two groups of respondents.
105   Significant differences shown by respondents of the first group before and immediately after
106   watching the film (students), were found on 12 out of the 25 scales (Table 1).

107   **Table 1.** Changing in representations of the older people after the watching the film (students).

Scales	Mean before watching the film	Mean after watching the film	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
emotional – unemotional*	1.10	1.68	-2.787b	0.005
purposeless – purposeful	-0.17	-1.18	-3.187c	0.001
active life position – having no life goal*	-0.02	1.21	-3.121b	0.002
no desire to learn anything – the desire to learn a new	0.22	-1.03	-3.899c	0.000
cheerful – prone to depression*	0.40	1.02	-2.053b	0.040
passive – initiative	0.28	-0.88	-3.325c	0.001
unrestrained – self-contained	-0.03	-0.65	-2.038c	0.042
conflict – peaceful	-0.28	-0.80	-2.281c	0.023
strives for a full life – lost the meaning of life*	0.35	1.35	-3.451b	0.001
craving for the spiritual – limited interests*	0.68	1.67	-2.791b	0.005
fast tired – stamina	1.68	0.37	-3.420c	0.001
new is not perceived – a modern view on new things	1.35	-0.62	-4.894c	0.000

108
109   Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The significant differences are only represented: b – based on negative ranks, c –
110   based on positive ranks.

111   * inversive scales: higher rating means more negative attitude

112
113   The changes took place referring to activity of older people. The respondents saw older people
114   as less initiative, purposeless and weak. Moreover, they defined older people's way of life as more
115   passive, having no desire for the knowledge or for living a full life. The results immediately after
116   watching the film demonstrated that the audience perceived the olderly as those who strived less to
117   learn new things, perceived them less positive and more limited in the interests. Also, the changes of
118   assessments related to the emotional sphere were discovered. Thus, older people were characterized
119   as even more unrestrained and conflict-prone with a tendency for depression and showing no
120   emotions.

121   A comparative analysis of the assessment of older people before and after watching the film,
122 given by respondents of the second group (graduate students), showed significant differences in 14
123 of the 25 scales (Table 2). Graduate students evaluated the elderly, unlike students, more positively
124 after watching the film. Changes of 9 common scales (purposeless – purposeful, cheerful – prone to
125 depression, passive – initiative, conflict –peaceful, new is not perceived – a modern view on new
126 things, etc.) had different directions for students and graduate students. After watching the film the
127 elderly seemed to be more purposeful, active and successful, responsible and with a good sense of
128 humor. There were changes in assessments in the emotional sphere (more cheerful, peaceful) and
129 cognitive (more intelligent) in references to novelty and life in general (the strive to learn new things,
130 the desire for a full life).

131   **Table 2.** Changing in representations of the older people after the watching the film (graduate
132 students).

Scales	Mean before watching the film	Mean after watching the film	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
smart – stupid	-0.40	-1.10	-3.383b	0.001
purposeless – purposeful	-0.17	0.60	-3.036c	0.002
active life position – having no life goal*	-0.67	-0.47	-2.347b	0.019
no desire to learn anything – the desire to learn a new	-1.07	0.23	-3.795c	0.000
cheerful – prone to depression*	0.33	-0.97	-3.795b	0.002
passive – initiative	-0.53	0.37	-2.673c	0.008
takes responsibility – blames others for his problems	0.40	-0.53	-3.077b	0.002
conflict – peaceful	-0.40	0.33	-2.729c	0.006
strives for a full life – lost the meaning of life*	-0.20	-1.07	-2.361b	0.018
fast tired – stamina	-1.73	-0.47	-3.376c	0.001
considered someone else's opinion – to impose their views*	1.30	-0.10	-4.065b	0.000
have achieved in life what they wanted – don't have time for a lot of things in life *	0.77	-0.20	-3.050b	0.002
new is not perceived – a modern view on new things	-1.37	-0.17	-3.493c	0.000
with a sense of humor – without a sense of humor	-0.57	-1.10	-2.430b	0.015

133

134 Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The significant differences are only represented: b – based on positive ranks, c –
135 based on negative ranks.

136 * inversive scales: higher rating means more negative attitude

137
138   The data obtained confirmed the hypothesis of the research. A number of characteristics related
139 to the motivational-regulatory, emotional and cognitive spheres showed significant changes after
140 watching the film, but at the same time the direction of these changes was unexpected. Thus, the first
141 group (young people - students) demonstrated the decreasing level of positive representation after
142 watching the film. Even before the film, students described older people more negatively as less
143 intelligent and interesting, more conflict, angry and aggressive than young people (Wilcoxon
144 signed-rank test, p<0.01). This generally negative representation can be explained by a special view
145 of quite young people on the "old". Thus, the question arises: why the attempt of the filmmakers to

146   make the image of the elderly quite positive failed to change participants' representation. Moreover,
147   it made the old ones even less attractive.
148   Meanwhile, there was an opposite trend in the second group (young people – graduate
149   students). The assessments of older people after watching the film changed for the better one. The
150   graduate students, unlike students, demonstrated a more "adequate" view on the elderly before
151   watching the film. Despite a number of negative assessments, the elderly, along with the young, saw
152   them as smart and striving for a full life, sociable and interesting persons.
153   The revealed controversial effects of the cinema can be explained by differences in respondents'
154   age, their qualifications (taking into consideration both individual and psychological characteristics)
155   and their experience of interaction with the seniors. The film might reinforce the negative
156   representation of the elderly by very young people (students) if it shows some negative aspects of
157   their life, while their image, apparently, was not formed yet in the students' minds. On the other
158   hand, graduate students might have a more complex view on older people, because of graduates'
159   age and, also, as a result of more diverse interactions with the elderly, in science, for example. In this
160   case, their perception of the film could be focused on its positive ideas, strengthening the previously
161   formed positive image of an older person. In addition, graduate students, who have chosen the
162   scientific career path most likely have different from students individual psychological
163   characteristics. Furthermore, a high level of analytical skills contributes to a more complex
164   perception of the world and a deep assessment of the phenomena that can affect their attitude
165   towards the older generation and the interpretation of their images in the movies. At the same time,
166   the characteristics of the film itself, as well as the cultural differences between its creators and
167   viewers, may form additional factors of negative impact. Comedy, as a genre, can have an opposite
168   effect. Younger people perceived the desire of older characters to give their lives new meanings in
169   their own way and they saw the futility of these attempts. Respondents with bigger experience could
170   be more tolerant to the specifics of the genre, and their perception of the film was more complicated
171   and implemented in a broader context.
172   Comparing the results of two groups of respondents (students and graduate students), it can be
173   suggested that the impact efficiency of the film is determined by the content and the level of
174   representation formation associated with the age of the audience and their experience. The
175   forecasting of the impact of the film on young people requires taking into account factors related to
176   both their individual characteristics and the special features of the film itself. In order to achieve
177   the desired effect, it is necessary to understand both the content of current ideas and the possibilities
178   of polysemantic perception of the film, as well as to consider the potential of deep cognitive
179   processing of what the viewer sees (for example, discussion). This might be seen as a way to increase
180   the effectiveness of the positive film impact, the mechanisms of which require further research.
181   The third stage of the study determined the stability of changes in assessment throughout some
182   time. To complete this task, a second survey among respondents (group 1) was conducted 2 weeks
183   after watching the film.
184   It resulted in significant differences, which were found only on 4 scales (desire to a full life – lost
185   the meaning of life, craving for the spiritual – limited interests, fast tired – stamina, new is not
186   perceived – a modern view on new things, Wilcoxon signed-rank test, $p < 0.05$). The existence of
187   these characteristics, which relate to the inferiority and limited lives of older people, might be
188   explained by the most vivid and memorable moments in the film, which have the greatest impact on
189   the audience. The ratings for the remaining characteristics were not different from those identified
190   before the view. That leads to the conclusion that a single viewing of the film, in general, did not
191   have a significant impact on the way audience see the elderly. Most of the changes discovered
192   immediately after watching the movie had not been preserved in time. The study of the formation
193   mechanisms of sustainable changes is the task for the future research.
194   The correlation of the impact effectiveness between the gender of the respondents was
195   determined by comparing the assessment separately for males and females in each group. As a
196   result, in the first group, women were found to have significant differences in scores on 13 scales,
197   and men in three, two of which were common (no desire to learn anything – a thirst for learning new,

198   new is not perceived – a modern view of new things, Wilcoxon signed-rank test, p < 0.05). The
199   findings suggested a greater impact of the film on women than on men. As for the comparison of
200   males and females in the second group, such results have not been noted there. The analysis
201   revealed an equal number of considerable differences in scores (on 10 scales) before and after
202   watching the film (Wilcoxon signed-rank test, p<0.05). Overall, the gender has less influence on the
203   film impact than other individual characteristics of the respondents. This assumption requires
204   further justification and study of the contribution of individual factors to the effectiveness of the
205   impact.
206   The data on the frequency of watching movies was obtained and as it follows: 56% of
207   respondents watch movies several times a week and more often, several times a month and less
208   often are 44 % only. However, there were no differences between them in the ratings before and after
209   watching the film (Mann-Whitney U test, p < 0.05).
210   It seems to be not possible to determine the relationship between the attractiveness of the film
211   and the effectiveness of its impact, as there was no differentiation of respondents' ratings on this
212   basis. Only six young people noted the film as not attractive, the others gave it a positive rating.

5. Conclusions

214   As a result of the study, the influence of cinema on the audience's representation was
215   determined. Young people changed their representations of the motivational and regulatory,
216   cognitive and emotional characteristics of the older people after watching a film about the elderly.
217   However, the direction of changes was different for students and postgraduates. Despite the fact
218   that almost all respondents rated the film as attractive, it was proved to have a positive and negative
219   impact. This result can be explained by various reasons: starting from the age and experience of the
220   respondents to the special features of the film. In this regard, the contribution of individual factors to
221   the effectiveness of the impact and the prediction of its specific effects require further study. The
222   further investigation can be devoted to studying the continuance of these impacts over time.

225   **Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

227   1.   Zhuravlev, A.L.; Pavlova, N.D. Introduction. In *Psychological impact: mechanisms, strategy, counteraction*;
228   Zhuravlev, A.L., Pavlova, N.D., Eds.; Institute of Psychology of RAS: Moscow, Russia, 2012; pp. 5-8; ISBN
229   978-5-9270-0220-7.
230   2.   Latynov, V.V. *Psychology of communicative impact*; Institute of Psychology of RAS: Moscow, Russia, 2013;
231   ISBN: 978-5-9270-0255-9.
232   3.   Appel, M. Fictional narratives cultivate just-world-beliefs. *Journal of Communication* **2008**, *58*, 62–83,
233   doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2007.00374.x
234   4.   Behm-Morawitz, E.; Mastro, D. Mean girls? The influence of gender portrayals in teen movies on
235   emerging adults' gender-based attitudes and beliefs. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* **2008**, *85*,
236   131–146, doi.org/10.1177/107769900808500109
237   5.   Mastro, D.; Behm-Morawitz, E.; Kopacz, M. Exposure to television portrayals of latinos: The implications
238   of aversive racism and social identity theory. *Human Communication Research* **2008**, *34*, 1–27,
239   doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2007.00311.x
240   6.   Mirrlees, T. *Global entertainment media: between cultural imperialism and cultural globalization*. Routledge,
241   Taylor & Francis: New York, London, 2013.
242   7.   *The handbook of language and gender*; Holmes, J., Meyerhoff, M., Eds.; Blackwell Publishing Ltd.: Maiden,
243   Oxford, UK, 2003.
244   8.   Harris, R. *Psychology of Mass Communications*; Prime - Eurosign: St. Petersburg, Russia, 2002.
245   9.   Kubrak, T.A. The problem of information and psychological security in cinema discourse. *Psikhologicheskie*
246   *Issledovaniya* **2016**, *9* (47), 8. URL: http://psystudy.ru (accessed on: 27.02.2019).

247 10. Kubrak, T.A. The role of the psychological characteristics of the perception of cinema in the process of its
248   impact. In *Psychological impact in interpersonal and mass communication*; Zhuravlev, A.L., Pavlova, N.D., Eds.;
249   Institute of Psychology of RAS: Moscow, Russia, 2014; pp. 94-111; ISBN 78-5-9270-0286-3.
250 11. Lowe, T.; Brown, K.; Dessai, S.; de Franca Doria, M.; Haynes, K.; Vincent, K. Does tomorrow ever come?
251   Disaster narrative and public perceptions of climate change. *Public Understanding of Science* **2006**, *15* (4),
252   435–457, doi.org/10.1177/0963662506063796
253 12. McGreavey, B.; Liendfield, L. Entertaining our way to engagement? Climate change films and sustainable
254   development values. *Int. J. Sustainable Development* **2008**, *17* (2), 123 – 136, doi.org/10.1504/ijsd.2014.061766
255 13. Harwood, J.; Giles, H. Don't make me laugh: Age representations in a humorous context. *Discourse and*
256   *Society* **1992**, *3*, 403-436, doi.org/10.1177/0957926592003004001
257 14. Morgan, S.E.; Movius, L.; Cody, M.J. The power of narratives: The effects of entertainment television organ
258   donation storylines on the attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors of donors and nondonors. *Journal of*
259   *Communication* **2009**, *59* (1), 135-151, doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.01408.x
260 15. Lemish, V.V. Representations of students studying in the specialty "social work" about the elderly and old
261   people. *News of the Russian State Pedagogical University (A.I. Herzen)* **2013**, *158*, 36-48.