

Styles of parent-child interactions in families with preschool-age children

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With regard to cultural-historical and activity approaches, collaborative activity with an adult, including communication as a type of meta-activity, is considered to be the necessary mechanism of child development. A child is considered to be an active partner, possessing his/her own motives, and is guided by mental representations of the parent and interactions with him/her. Russian psychologists have developed a range of parenting style classifications; however, these styles primarily emphasize a parent's position, contrary to methodological perspectives, with inadequate consideration of a child's own agency. The aims of the current research were to investigate actual goal-oriented interactions between preschoolers and their parents and to outline certain patterns (types) of interactions, considering both partners and analyzing interactions according to the activity model. A total of 75 parent-child dyads (children aged from 4.6 years to 6.11 years) participated in "collaborative activity trials" in which the observational method was based on the activity approach. Cluster analysis (k-means clusterization) revealed five different groups of parent-child dyads: conflictual, harmonious, distant and two-fold dominant (with dominant parent or dominant child). Between-group comparisons (Mann-Whitney U test) showed significant differences in a range of parameters of activity and emotional components of interactions. The harmonious type of interactions is not prevalent, although subgroups with different types of domination are the most common, which may be attributed to cultural peculiarities. Domination-subordination imbalance does not seem to seriously distort the normal developmental trajectory; however, in cases of conflictual and distant dyads, interactional issues might hinder the course of goal-oriented activity, which might serve as a predictor for potential difficulties in further learning.

Keywords: parent-child interactions, parenting styles, collaborative activity, parental scaffolding, preschoolers

Introduction

Numerous studies have demonstrated the relationship of mental, social, emotional, and personal behavioral development to particular qualities of parent-child interactions. Relevant to cultural-historical and activity approaches, collaborative activity with an adult, including communication as a type of meta-activity (Burmenskaya, 1997), is considered to be the necessary *source* of child development (Vygotsky, 1934/1998) because an adult possesses “ideal forms” of cultural and psychological tools that are interiorized by a child (Vygotsky, 1934/1998). According to Vygotsky’s theory, communication together with the morpho-physiological features of the brain constitute the *conditions* of development (in contrast to heredity and environment, as reported in the traditional studies of Western psychology) (Obukhova, 2013, p. 52).

At the early stages of that research paradigm, adults were regarded primarily as intermediaries between child and culture, not as people bonded to children with emotional and personal relationships (Rodina, 2012). Neo-Vygotskian researchers, such as Maya Lisina and Daniil Elkonin, further developed the concepts of *communication* and *leading activity* from motivational, emotional and personal perspectives (Karpov, 2005).

During preschool age, one of the leading types of activity is role-play in which a preschooler understands the meanings and motives of the “adult” social world. His/her emotions displayed in the logics of the — play plot (e.g., pretending to suffer from pain) may strikingly differ from the actual emotions experienced (e.g., experiencing pleasure from having fun playing hospital) (Elkonin, 1989) that require differentiation of motives and goals in the activity structure.

A child is not just an adult’s apprentice: he/she participates in an activity basing on his/her own motives. Lisina (1982) outlined the following groups of motives of communication: 1) cognitive or epistemological motives; 2) object-centered or practical motives in which the adults are partners in collaboration, assistants and models for correct action; and 3) interpersonal motives.

The goal of communication is regulating activity and achieving results, except for immediate interactions in the course of situational-personal communication, the first type of activity to be developed in the ontogeny (Lisina, 1982). The dominance of practical motives in communication at several stages of development does not exclude emotional and personal motives (Burmenskaya, 1997). Preschoolers develop non-situational cognitive (typically, at the ages of 3–5 years) and non-situational personal types (at the ages of 5–7 years) of communication. Non-situational cognitive communication is aimed at gaining information concerning the surrounding world, which is manifested in the form of numerous questions to an adult. Non-situational personal communication occurs when a child “discovers” the inner life of other people and becomes interested in their feelings and attitudes (compared to the “theory of mind” development). Lisina (1982) also outlined leading communication needs at different developmental stages: particularly, preschoolers experience a need for respect (ages, 3–5 years) and understanding (ages, 5–7 years). Thus, even play and object-oriented activities, such as drawing or solving puzzles, are enriched with a range of (inter)personal motives for a child, when an adult is engaged.

A child can have different motives of communication and can aim his/her actions at different objects in collaborative activity. The concept of “object of activity” in Leontyev’s theory is not restricted to material objects but refers also to the “facts of mind” (Stetsenko, 2005), such as representations of personality traits of a communication partner or his/her mental image.

Lisina emphasizes that interpersonal relationships are *products* of communication activity (according to Leontiev’s psychological structure of activity) (Lisina, 1982). Activity partners also develop mental representations (*obraz*) of each other and their interactions. The parent-child activity is largely mediated and guided by a child’s internalized representations (*obraz*) of the parent and relationships with him/her (Leontyev, 1981). Thus, the interaction process is characterized by pronounced reciprocity, as highlighted in a systemic approach to family functioning (Varga, 2011). The significant role of internalized partner’s qualities for communication motives is similar to G.H. Mead’s concept of “the generalized other,” showing consistent findings in cultural-historical and Western social constructionist approaches (Vari-Szilagi, 1991).

Another important contribution of cultural-historical and activity theory in the investigation of child-parent interactions is the concept of social situation of development: “a completely original, exclusive, single, and unique relation, specific to the given age, between the child and reality, mainly the social reality” (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 198). This concept allows child-parent interactions holistically and avoids breaking it down into multiple factors. The factor analysis via specific behavioral coding of child-parent interactions is widely used in early intervention and child welfare practice and has proven its efficiency for the applied purpose. However, it does not provide a solid base for overall theory and classification. For example, Power’s (2013) review of 3000 studies on preschooler-parent interactions published between 1985 and 2010 revealed a wide range (6 to 28) in the quantity of behavioral factors analyzed. Three similar factors were identified throughout the majority of studies: 1) directive parental control; 2) autonomy-promoting forms of control; and 3) positive emotional involvement with the child. It presumes the existence of global dimensions of parenting and core patterns of child-parent interactions, consistent with the cultural-historical approach.

In the 1960s, Baumrind (1967) identified three common styles of parenting behavior, with one style added later by Maccoby and Martin (1983), as well as corresponding patterns of children’s behavior (Table 1). The works by Baumrind became well-known in Russia, essentially through secondary sources, and continue to have much influence in the field of applied research. Baumrind’s work turned out to be compatible with Russian research because of its holistic (person-centered or, speaking about interactions, case-centered) nature and the focus on children’s own activity in response to different parenting behaviors.

The parenting styles identified by Baumrind and elaborated by Maccoby and Martin remain the only parenting styles with a strong empirical basis, relevant for Western cultures (Power, 2013).

Returning to the concept of social situation of development, we emphasize that it provides even more opportunities for understanding a child’s psychologi-

Table 1. Parenting styles and children’s associated behavioral patterns (according to Baumrind, 1967, and Maccoby and Martin, 1983)

Parenting style	A child’s associated behavioral patterns
1. Authoritative style (high levels of both responsiveness and demandingness)	Assertive, self-reliant
2. Authoritarian style (low responsiveness and high demandingness)	Discontented, withdrawn
3. Permissive style (high responsiveness and low demandingness)	Low self-control and low self-reliance
4. Uninvolved style (low levels of both responsiveness and demandingness)	Poor self-control, low self-esteem, and aggression

cal processes than systemic/contextual and socio-interactive approaches because the structure of the social situation of development consists of objective and subjective child’s positions. The objective position refers to “the system of socio-cultural expectations and requirements”; the subjective position is “the system of oriented images¹ which defines interaction and cooperation between a child and an adult” (Karabanova, 2012, p. 150). The subjective component is shared by the participants of communication and interaction (Karabanova, 2012, p. 150). From this perspective, the analysis is not limited to a child’s observed activity; it is extended to his/her system of mental representations and emotional experiences.

Russian psychologists have also developed a range of parenting style classifications (Spivakovskaya, 1981; Varga, 1986; Eidemiller & Yustitskis, 1999). However, they primarily emphasize a parent’s position, contrary to the methodological perspectives, with insufficient consideration to a child’s own agency (Shvedovskaya, 2006). It may be, in part, explained by a predominant interest in the field of education, where Soviet and Russian research of children’s activity are more voluminous and scrupulous. The studies of infant- and toddler-adult interactions were conducted primarily in orphanages to trace the trajectories of development under normal and deprivational conditions. Additionally, the review of diagnostic tools for the investigation of child-parent interactions in preschool aged children, for example, when a child cannot give reflective verbal accounts of his/her perceptions and attitudes, demonstrates their scarcity (Shvedovskaya, 2003). There are several recent developments, for example, integrating activity research with family systemic approach (Shvedovskaya, Zagvozdina & Yu, 2014); however, activity-based typology of parent-child interactions is still an underinvestigated topic.

The aims of the current research were to investigate actual goal-oriented interactions between preschoolers and their parents and outline certain patterns (types) of such interactions, considering both partners and analyzing their interactions according to the activity model.

¹ *Obraz*, in this article, is translated as “mental representation.”

Method

Child-parent dyads attending 6 public preschool facilities in Moscow were randomly assigned for participation in the research. The sample included 150 participants, i.e., 75 parents (all –mothers) and 75 children ranging in age from 4.6 years to 6.11 years.

The investigation of actual interactions in parent-child dyads was performed using the “collaborative activity trials” (Burmenskaya, Zakharova, Karabanova, Lebedeva & Liders, 2007). This observational method allows us to evaluate several parameters of interactions. The core difference between the “collaborative activity trials” method and behavioral coding is in the specific organization of the collaborative activity.

During the “collaborative activity trials,” a parent-child dyad is provided with the task of making up a figure of play-dough, mosaic or building blocks according to a given sample. In other words, the *goal* and the *conditions* of the activity are set by a researcher. During the interactions, one can observe *actions* and *operations* (e.g., control, giving directions) as well as emotional reactions, which can give insight into the *motives* of interactions and (dis)satisfaction of the underlying *needs* and *mental representations* of the partners. Thus, the design of the trials reflects the classic Leontyev’s (1981) scheme of activity structure.

To facilitate collaboration and highlight the typical role distribution in a parent-child dyad, the task has the following amplification. The specimen of the required handcraft product is given only to one of the participants, so the other participant has to act under the partner’s guidance. The person who has the specimen is responsible for explaining the actions that are necessary to obtain the correct figure but cannot describe the final results (e.g., comments “You should make a car” or “It looks like a letter «Z»” do not comply with the rules). Roles of “the guide” and “the guided” are distributed between a parent and a child according to their own preferences, which also provides meaningful information regarding their relationships.

The list of parameters for the analysis of collaborative activity in parent-child dyads includes cognitive and emotional components of interactions.

The activity components of interaction include the following parameters (for examples of rubrics, refer to Table 2):

1. Peculiarities of distribution of the roles of a “leader” and a “subordinate”;
2. Reasonability and coherence of requirements imposed on a partner;
3. Efficiency of activity regulation, considering how complete and elaborate the requirements are; if the reference points for action fulfillment are outlined adequately; how comprehensible the notions used are to the child; if a partner’s demands and instructions are perceived as a direct guidance for action; if the individual and age (developmental) peculiarities of a partner are considered;
4. Extent of coherence of the interactional partners’ actions;
5. Dominating forms of control in task-oriented collaboration of a child and a parent: if the control is essential or formal; if the separated stages and final results are subject to control;

6. Peculiarities of the partners' attitudes towards success/failure; character of self and a partner's activity assessment as well as evaluation of general results of the activity; and
7. The subordinate partner's readiness to accept the guidance; adequate reaction to the partner's remarks; eagerness to achieve positive results in the course of interaction.

Table 2. Example of rubrics for evaluation of the activity components of child-parent interactions

Peculiarities of the partners' attitudes towards success/failure; character of self and a partner's activity assessment as well as evaluation of general results of the activity.

Positive manifestations	Negative manifestations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive assessment of the subordinate partner's actions; • Positive assessment of one's own leadership; • Adequate assessment of the activity results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative assessment of the subordinate partner's actions; • Negative assessment of one's own leadership; • Preliminary assessment — warning; • Assessment of a partner's personality, stigmatization; • Inadequate assessment of the activity results.

Efficiency of activity regulation, considering how complete and elaborate the requirements are; how adequately the reference points for action fulfillment are outlined; how comprehensible the notions used are to the child; if a partner's demands and instructions are perceived as a direct guidance for action; if the individual and age (developmental) peculiarities of a partner are considered.

Positive manifestations	Negative manifestations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desired actions are marked by certain reference points; • Notions and terms used are comprehensible by a partner; • Statements are completed and elaborated; • Directions are given in a positive manner (how one should act to achieve success); • Directions refer to the next sequential step. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directions do not correspond with the contents of the activity; • Notions and terms are used without considering age (developmental) abilities of a partner, overestimating or underestimating them; • Statements are fragmental and desultory; • Directions are formulated based on negative aspects (how one should not act); • Directions refer to future results, not connected to the current activity.

The emotional components of interaction include the following parameters (for examples of rubrics, refer to Table 3):

1. The partners' eagerness to continue interactions, their commitment to collaboration, sharing responsibility in the course of task fulfillment, interest in a partner;
2. Peculiarity of distance setting in the course of interactions with a partner, inclination to or avoidance of close contacts;
3. Peculiarities of emotional acceptance of a partner, recognition and respect of his rights to individuality, empathy in situations of success and support in difficult moments;

4. Aspiration to protect a partner from negative emotional experiences, to level or to share the responsibility of a failure; and
5. Character of the partners' emotional reactions to significant situations as the indicators for feelings and emotional experiences of the interaction participants.

Table 3. Example of rubrics for evaluation of the emotional components of child-parent interactions

The partners' eagerness to continue interactions, their commitment to collaboration, sharing responsibility in the course of task fulfillment, and interest in a partner.

Positive manifestations

- Promotion of a partner's actions (a question, an advice, a comment of recognition);
- Support and respect of a partner's initiative;
- Shared responsibility, use of the "we" pronoun;
- Maintaining contact (eye-sight, touch, scaffolding questions).

Negative manifestations

- A partner's passivity becomes the reason for ceasing interaction;
 - Ignoring a partner's initiative;
 - Responsibility of failure imposed on a partner;
 - Responsibility of failure imposed on oneself;
 - Lack of attempts to maintain contacts with a partner.
-

Aspiration to protect a partner from negative emotional experiences, to level or to share the responsibility of a failure.

Positive manifestations

- Understanding of a partner's actual difficulties, obstacles in the interactions;
- Consolation of a partner, devaluation of the failure;
- Aspiration to justify a partner in the situation of failure, emphasize his/her virtues.

Negative manifestations

- Making a partner responsible for the failure;
 - Blaming a partner, laughing at him/her or giving him/her "a diagnosis";
 - Emphasizing failures, criticism and condemnation of a partner's actions.
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K-means clusterization was used to divide parent-child dyads into groups; Mann-Whitney U test was used to explore between-group differences considering certain interactional parameters.

Results

Clusterization. Implementation of the cluster analysis of the results of the collaborative activity trials using the k-means clusterization method revealed five different groups ($p < 0.05$) of parent-child dyads that vary in the interactional parameters:

- 1) conflictual;
- 2) harmonious;
- 3) distant; 4) "dominant parent — subordinate child" and
- 5) dominant child — indulgent parent".

Table 4. Distribution of parent-child dyads according to the five types of interactions

№	Type	Number of dyads (people)	Number of participants in the group (%)
1.	Conflictual	4 (8 people)	5.3
2.	Harmonious	15 (30 people)	20.0
3.	Distant	4 (8 people)	5.3
4.	Dominant parent — subordinate child	30 (60 people)	40.0
5.	Dominant child — indulgent parent	22 (44 people)	29.3
	Total	75 (150 people)	100

Table 4 represents the distribution of parent-child dyads according to those types.

The most voluminous group in the sample — *dominant parent — subordinate child* — includes 30 dyads, followed by *dominant child — indulgent parent* and *harmonious* groups. *Conflictual* and *distant* groups are limited to 4 dyads each.

Between-group comparison. Between-group comparison using the Mann-Whitney U test showed that the discovered groups significantly differed ($p < 0.05$) in certain parameters of activity and emotional components of interactions.

The results obtained allowed us to evaluate the core parameters, explaining the differences between the five groups:

- Activity aspect of interactions according to the character of role distribution (leadership, coherence of guidance, peculiarities of assuming control) and the character of realization of task-oriented collaboration (providing instructions, orientation towards a partner’s activity, peculiarities of control and assessment); and
- Emotional aspect of interactions according to the character of emotional vector of interactions (aspiration for collaboration, distance with a partner, emotional acceptance/rejection of a partner) and emotional reaction to success or failure (relationships of protection or blame, emotional manifestations).

Notably, the activity (and, in some sense, emotional) aspect of the investigated interactions may be described as scaffolding, i.e., the support given to a younger learner by an older, more experienced adult while acting in the zone of proximal development (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1978).

Table 5. Between-group comparison of interactional parameters in different types of dyads

Dyads	Dyads			
	Harmonious	Distant	Dominant parent	Dominant child
Conflictual	All parameters (p=0.000).	All parameters related to child (from p=0.008 to p=0.04). Parameters related to parent: role distribution (3 parameters); goal-oriented activity (4); emotional interactions (1); emotional assessment of results (1); p= from 0.008 to 0.040).	All parameters related to child (p=0.000). Parameters related to parent: role distribution (3 parameters); goal-oriented activity (8); emotional interactions (8); emotional assessment of results (4); p= from 0.000 to 0.013).	Parameters related to child: role distribution (3 parameters); goal-oriented activity (7); emotional interactions (3); emotional assessment of results (2); p= from 0.000 to 0.055). Parameters related to parent: role distribution (8 parameters); goal-oriented activity (7); emotional interactions (9); emotional assessment of results (5); p= from 0.000 to 0.055).
Harmonious		All parameters related to child did not reveal significant differences. All parameters related to parent (p=0.000).	All parameters related to child did not reveal significant differences. All parameters related to parent (p=0.000).	All parameters (p=0.000)
Distant			All parameters related to the child did not reveal significant differences. Parameters related to parent: role distribution (5 parameters); goal-oriented activity (6); emotional interactions (11); emotional assessment of results (4); p= from 0.000 to 0.053).	All parameters related to child (from p=0.000 to p=0.001). Parameters related to parent: role distribution (8 parameters); goal-oriented activity (4); emotional interactions (11); emotional assessment of results (5); p= from 0.000 to 0.055).
Dominant parent				All parameters related to child (p=0.000). Parameters related to parent: role distribution (2 parameters); goal-oriented activity (3); emotional interactions (1); emotional assessment of results (1); p= from 0.000 to 0.028).

Table 6. Peculiarities of parent’s and child’s positions in interactions

№	Parameters of interactions	Peculiarities of position in interactions		Character of interactions
		Parent	Child	
1.	Conflictual type of interactions	Authoritarianism, domination	Egocentrism, activeness	“WE” — incoherence
2.	Harmonious type of interactions	Democracy, acceptance	Acceptance	Complimentary “WE”
3.	Distant type of interactions	Distance, coldness	Acceptance	Interactions “side by side” (but not “together”)
4.	Dominant type of interaction: dominant parent	Authoritarianism	Acceptance	Dictate — subordination
5.	Dominant type of interaction: dominant child	Indulgence	Egocentrism, activeness	Dictate — subordination

Another important result is the likelihood of giving a qualitative picture of the characteristics of the outlined types of interactions. First, we summarized the positions of parents and children in the interactions.

There are neither completely identical nor similar parent’s positions within the groups.

Second, based on the criteria of correlation of activity-oriented and emotional interaction components in the child and in the parent, we have developed and described the empirical typology of relationships in parent-child dyad.

Conflictual type of relationships

Roles. In a conflictual dyad, the active struggle for leadership in interactions is maintained. A child tries to defend his/her priority, when leadership and subordination are concerned. A conflictual parent becomes active in response to his/her child’s initiative; however, if a situation actually requires assuming a subordinate position, a conflictual parent is inclined to avoid interactions or respond negatively to his/her child’s requests and directions.

Scaffolding. The interactions in a conflictual dyad are characterized by a prominent strain. A child intervenes actively in a parent’s activities and destabilizes a parent’s capacity to plan his/her actions. A parent’s guidance of a child’s actions consists of fragmental commands. A parent is *a priori* sure that a child understands his/her demands and instructions. A child uses the same model of providing instructions: attempts to perform some action on his/her own, without explaining or demonstrating to the parent what the parent should do. A conflictual parent’s support is untimely: (s)he primarily controls the final results of a child’s actions without step-by-step control and prefers to use criticism, laugh and give “diagnosis.” This type of action does not allow a child to correct his/her own actions efficiently, so the child prefers to ignore the adult’s remarks and initiatives. The child demon-

strates a wide range of protest behaviors against his/her parent's guidance: formally executing directions, disputing, refusing to fulfill the demands and demonstrating negative attitudes towards adults.

Results. In an actual situation of activity failure, both parent and child negatively assess the partner's actions. A parent is inclined to shift responsibility for failure to a child. (S)he also uses such types of assessment as stigmatization and preliminary assessment.

Emotions. Both interactional partners tend to ignore each other's emotional states. Because of internal strain, they are not eager to initiate and maintain contact and passively respond to a partner's passivity. A parent claims the loss of contact with his/her child. In the emotional aspect, a parent often displays irritability, malevolence, coldness towards a child, as well as avoids bodily contact. A child displays reciprocal irritability.

Harmonious type of interactions

Roles. Harmonious interactions are peculiar with mutual understanding and coordination of positions in a child-parent dyad. Role distribution is complimentary and is adjusted to the contents of the activity. When a parent leads, a child accepts his/her guidance without struggle. Conversely, a child's initiative is accepted by a parent.

Scaffolding. A parent's guidance is coherent; the requirements are adjusted to a child's level of comprehension. A parent is inclined to support a child in difficult situations but does not try to replace a child in his/her own activity. Control is targeted at the contents of the activity. A parent considers the child's developmental and individual peculiarities while maintaining object-oriented collaboration.

Results. Both partners adequately assess the results of their activity. A parent does not blame the child for failures, trying to solve problems in a constructive manner and demonstrating the value of the child. A parent's and a child's emotional manifestations are adequate for situations of success or failure.

Emotions. Both partners want to maintain contact, including bodily one. A parent uses the "we" pronoun for comments and calls the child by his/her name. Both a parent and a child demonstrate emotional acceptance and warmth.

Distant type of interactions

Roles. A distant parent prefers to lead the interactions because it is a simple way to make the child achieve the parent's own goals. A child accepts this situation and does not actively struggle for leadership.

Scaffolding. A distant parent tends to overestimate a child's abilities. (S)he is not oriented to a child's actions and ignores his/her emotional states. In case a child cannot complete the task, it is easier for a parent to do it him/herself rather than explain anything or provide support. A parent does not pay attention to interim results during the process of controlling the child's actions. A child can conclude his/her course of actions to be right or wrong only after demonstrating the final

result, which prevents the child from timely and efficient correction of his/her own actions. In cases that require the child's leadership in interactions, a parent acts formally. (S)he easily refuses to follow the child's guidance and ignores his/her remarks. A child's initiative and assertiveness cause emotional discomfort in a parent. However, compared to the conflictual type of interactions, the distant type does not maintain any pronounced strain in interactions. If a child ceases his/her activity, a parent withdraws from interactions and does not attempt to revoke the child's activity.

Results. A parent is inclined to assess a child's actions negatively and put the responsibility for failures on him/her. Situations of failure result in emphasizing failures, criticism, arrogance, humiliation of the child's personality, and, at the same time, relative unimportance of success. For a parent, failure is a significantly discomforting event, whereas success is expected by default.

Emotions. Compared to other types of relationships, this type is less beneficial in its emotional aspect. Bodily contact is avoided in the parent-child dyad. A parent lacks empathy and displays emotional coldness.

Dominant parent — subordinate child

Roles. A dominant parent actively takes on the leading position regardless of whether (s)he should be a leader or a subordinate in the situational context. (S)he tends to overestimate a child's abilities and demonstrates lack of empathy. There is no pronounced struggle or conflict in the interactions: the role distribution is accepted by both interacting participants.

Scaffolding. A dominant parent is incoherent in his/her guidance. A parent tries to support the interactions and motivate the child but uses non-constructive means, e.g., comments regarding the loss of contact, thus aggravating a child's distraction. A parent positively assesses the child's personality positively and adjusts his/her actions to the child's current state.

Results. Assessment of the child's actions is adequately based on the results of those actions.

Emotions. There are no pronounced negative emotional manifestations in this type of dyadic interactions; however, the child feels anxiety in situations of failure.

Dominant child — indulgent parent

Roles. A child's position is similar to that in the conflictual type of interactions. A child is egocentric and active but is not trying to struggle for leadership, and the level of conflict in the dyadic interactions is minimal.

Scaffolding. An indulgent parent is coherent in guidance; (s)he adjusts his/her action to the child's conditions. Instructions adequately correspond to the contents of the activity; the instructions employ notions, comprehensible for the child, although they refer to delayed results. A parent is inclined to discuss the ways of action with a child. Generally, a parent aims at achieving positive results in interactions but does not try to intervene in a child's activity and maintain step-by-step

control, thus providing him/her with the opportunity to take the initiative. An indulgent parent can support the child, replacing a child's activity in complicated situations. There is no pronounced negativism or challenge of requirements from the child's perspective. Both interacting partners positively assess each other's actions.

Results. A parent's emotional reactions to success or failure are adequate; there is no emotional coldness, malevolence, or underestimation of success. In case of failure, an indulgent parent is inclined to accept full responsibility for the failure.

Emotions. When hindrances occur during the activity, both partners continue to maintain contact. A parent is in close proximity to the child and uses bodily contact. A child demonstrates formal obedience to instructions; maintains emotional distance from the parent and expresses anxiety in case of failure or when corrective remarks are made.

Discussion

Empirical research has revealed five types of child-parent interaction, including conflictual, harmonious, distant and dominant (divided into "dominant parent — subordinate child" and "dominant child – indulgent parent" subgroups), which differ both in activity (role distribution, character of realization of task-oriented collaboration) and emotional (emotional vector of interactions, emotional reaction to success or failure) aspects of interactions.

The obtained differences in scaffolding practices in our research are more elaborate than the differences in emotional manifestations, which can be generally described with the continuum of rejection — indifference — acceptance. Using the activity approach as the theoretical framework for research in parent-child interactions can capture the wealth of real-life interactions and their patterns. The notion of scaffolding includes *structure* and several aspects of *control*, which, in addition to *warmth*, constitute the three empirically based parenting dimensions (Power, 2013).

Notably, the harmonious type of interactions is not prevalent, whereas subgroups with different types of domination are the most common types of interactions. It cannot be interpreted as a sign of general poor well-being in the sample of Russian families with preschoolers. The prevalence of power misbalances in parent-child dyads may be attributed to cultural peculiarities, e.g., weak psychological borders between family members (Varga, 2011).

There is not much reliable evidence regarding cultural peculiarities of Russian families. For example, the notion of attachment styles (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978) can be roughly related to the emotional aspect of interactions and "working models," i.e., mental representations of relationships with parents (Bowlby, 1973). The large-scale research of attachment styles in Moscow preschoolers, conducted in 2000–2005, revealed the picture of 30 % of children with secure attachment, 20 % with anxious-avoidant attachment and 50 % with ambivalent attachment (Avdeeva, 2006). Children have emotional connections with their par-

ents; however, they likely do not perceive their family situation as coherent and stable (e.g., a “dominant” child might feel unsafe due to the lack of hierarchy and a “subordinate” child, on the contrary, might feel unsafe due to a parent’s intrusive leadership).

Domination-subordination misbalance seems to not seriously distort the normal developmental trajectory. For example, Saxena (2010) described two types of educational scaffolding: “supportive scaffolding” with “initiation-response-follow-up” pattern and “directive scaffolding” with “initiation-response-evaluation” pattern. These two scaffolding types differ not only in structural organization but also in an adult’s assumptions regarding the nature of communication situations; “directive scaffolding” still allows a child to proceed in the zone of proximal development. However, in cases of conflictual and distant dyads, interactional issues hinder the course of goal-oriented activity, which might serve as a predictor for potential difficulties in future learning activities.

Our study has several limitations. First, our study was conducted in laboratory settings and conditions involving children’s and parents’ interactions, while there was evidence that children’s and parents’ everyday experience with interactions and, specifically, scaffolding may be significantly more diverse (Gauvian, 2005). Second, peculiarities of collaborative activity change rapidly, and there is a need to consider developmental dynamics. For example, while mothers of preschoolers concentrate on establishing joint understanding of the task, mothers of first-graders employ more sophisticated solution strategies, such as visualization of an activity plan (Gauvian, 1992). Furthermore, to explore the social situation of development as the entire range of a child’s social interactions and connections, additional research should involve both parents and peers (siblings and friends) and consider models of a wide range of collaborative activities.

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