

REMAKING KIDULTS' IRRESPONSIBILITY: POSTMODERN VIEWPOINT

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The paper contains the theoretical discussion on a new socio-psychological figure of postmodernity – kidult, – a contemporary “20-40-year-old child”, the representative of the middle and upper classes who acclaims youth values unconsciously denying own age, and shows the lack of motivation in building classic adulthood markers: independence, family, and work. It is postulated that kidultism tends to become a normal and apprehensible practice of everyday life, and previous paradigms of adulthood and responsibility cannot be used to characterize today’s life-creational practices. The leading role of conventions as truly responsible psychological, social and cultural practices of postmodernity is promoted. As the overcome of negative trends of kidultism is spreading, the project proposal based on the networking community is presented. The project has its 13-steps scheme of realization, and performs the principles of the systemic approach, social constructivism, the concept of psychological practices, the theory of group dynamics, and C. Rogers’ approach to the group meetings.

Key words: immaturity, infantilism, irresponsibility, kidult, kidultism, life-creation, postmodernity.

Problem. Human society has always wanted to find the key to self-efficacy, self-realization, and happiness eventually. And lots of times this search was made by analyzing life strategies of those who appeared as serious and successful people. But what if seriousness and success aren’t the reference points to the mature and self-realized personality anymore?

In the conditions of ongoing political, economic, demographic and socio-cultural transformations becoming an adult, mature person has new connotations. Postmodernity claims the social game in which personality loses the constancy of its own identity; it should always transform its identity and find ways to self-efficiency in current conditions of liquid modernity (Z. Bauman).

Socio-psychological characteristics of the “postmodern” individual, as opposed to the “modern” individual, change in the direction of losing competitiveness and rationality. Admiring its own scientific and technical achievements, “modern” person was focused on increasing cognitive abilities, was active, impatient, and arrogant about its own capabilities, tested its own endurance, and stimulated self-regulation. Thus, the era of individualism has come, which has led to the expansion of alienation, indifference, focusing on quick profits, and lack of understanding those activities consequences. However, these hardened characteristics tend to be transformed in postmodern

reality, where individuals cease to put themselves in opposition to the world, and their identity becomes the result of their own life situation design.

As far as identity is always striving for balanced coordination of social and personal aspects, in unstable conditions it reaches its crisis which is acute, limited in time, subjective experience of impossibility to implement life goals, objectives and plans [2]. Therefore, it is logical that the basis of postmodern life is not the creation of individual identity, but avoiding fixation. Personality is transformed into motion, process, search, with no place for steadiness and sustainability (J. Holstein, J. Gubrium, T. Tytarenko). That's why postmodern personality should continuously adapt to changes and seek ways of self-realization to overcome uncertainty.

As a result, the response to this reality lies in escapism, infantilism, and dependence that engendered new social figure – “kidult”. Kidults, contemporary “20-40-year-old children”, are representatives of the middle and upper classes who acclaim youth values unconsciously denying their age, and do not plan to have family or make any durable investments in the construction of their own lives. So, kidult appeared as a new psycho-social type.

The “kidult” subject is predominantly developed in Western European countries and the USA (J. Bernardini, A. Calcutt, J. Cote, K. Crawford, F. Furedi). Variously, there is talk about the worrying increase of “adultescents” and “kidults” in the US and Australia, “Nesthocker” in Germany, “KIPPERS” (Kids In Parents’ Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings) in the UK, “mammone” in Italy, “boomerang kids” in Canada, and “kawaii” in Japan.

After the baby boom years, the birth rate in the Western world has progressively decreased and, as a consequence, the average age has risen strongly and alarmingly tends to grow. It is mentioned in J. Bernardini’s works, that in 1950 those who were fourteen years old or less made up more than a third of the world's population; today these are only 13.5%, and it is estimated, that in forty years they will be only 8.6%. In the United States the average age has switched from 25 years old in 1960 to 38 in 2012. Moreover, it is assumed that the number of people over seventy years old will be greater than that of teenagers by the year 2050 in the United States. The European scenario reflects this trend in an even more obvious manner: in France the average age is 40 years old, in Spain and Bulgaria 42, in Italy and Germany 44. Young people are elsewhere: in the Second and the Third World, but still do not constitute a reachable target for postmodern transformations [1].

In addition to demographic data, the researchers postulate that the boundaries between age groups are also becoming less clear, so that both adults and children, and the elderly people take on various forms of each other’s behavior (H. Blatterer, A.I. Brzezińska, D. Burrell, G. Cross, M. Danesi, G.G. Debert, P. Sweetman).

There also can be benefits for both – kidults and their parents. Kidults can live longer under their parents' protection and the parents can get more support from their grown up children, overcoming the absence or the shortage of psychological, social, and/or economic resources. According to information at www.data.oecd.org, several countries noted the increasing number of young adults who return home after living outside the family: the part of those who returned to parental houses increased from 25% in 1950 to 46% in 2001. In European countries there are 48% of women and 36% of men living in the parental houses among people aged from 18 to 34 years old there; in Japan there are 70% of single working women aged between 30-35 years old, who share the home with parents; in the United States there are 38% of young adults living with parents.

So, we find youthfulness and childishness the subject of fetishization of adult behavior absence.

Can such perspective of demographic aging through the prism of social rejuvenation processes lead to the psychological failure? Nobody answers clearly. So, the aim of the article is to give an answer to this question, and present an effective strategy (in a project manner) for prevention and overcoming this theoretical failure which is treated as irresponsibility.

So, on the one hand, as not caring in their early years about building career, acquiring ownership, and creating family, kidults do not invest in developing their psychological resources which are better self-consciousness and adequate self-esteem. Therefore, they have a perspective to remain dependent for the whole life [1].

An important kidult problem is the lack of motivation in building classic adulthood markers: independence, family, and work [3]. Often there is the lack of kidults' motivation and procrastination tendencies, which hinder plans achieving, and thus setting any tasks, both global and daily, is devalued and despised thing. Personal aims and intentions are not being implemented into practice that breaks kidult self-efficiency in its traditional meaning.

But on the other hand, kidultism tends to become a normal and apprehensible practice of postmodern everyday life, where leisure and pleasure are perceived as keys to development and happiness. Staying young and childish becomes a strategy for coping with unstable social conditions and unclear future.

Taking into account the historical-generational agenda, we can clearly define that the phenomenon of infantilization concerns almost exclusively people, who are in their thirties and forties currently, those who once were labeled as baby boomers and characterized by the significant contrast of values and behavior in comparison with their parents [1]. This generation has preferred to reject and deny the culture of older people to exalt the value that the life stage of youth has been acquired, rather than creating a new and better

meaning of maturity. By refusing a culture based on authoritarianism, patriarchy and masculinity they were trying to become better partners and parents, but failed to propose an alternative model of maturity [1]. But this failure was only seen by the previous, so-called, great generations.

On a psychological level, the standard model of adulthood is provided for greater self-understanding and self-confidence, resulting from accumulation of experiences and skills, and by the consequent social validation [1]. The adulthood as a prototype of stability, experience and certainty has been preserved over time, but today this representation has been transformed from an idea into a hard-imagined ideal [4].

In the classical paradigm responsibility, which used to be strongly correlated with the adulthood, was the characteristic of personality's social typicality [5]. The individual had to be accountable to lots of institutions and after that become responsible for oneself, so it was the mechanism of control transforming from external to internal. Autonomic responsibility was kind of elevation over the life, ability to self-determination according to its holistic flow [5]. But postmodern understanding of the ongoing realities of life in discursive justification of variety of cultural worlds and types of goal-setting has given a chance of the formation of a new culture of integrating of something another without subordination or assimilation [7]. It means that responsibility as personal experience should be embedded in the life context, but not to become something standing over life and personality. The postmodern legitimization of the coexistence of different cultural logics, ways of understanding and implementation of the world also allowed to change the meaning of the "barbaric" child's thinking regarding to adult rationality and responsibility from the marginal and peripheral pole to the progressive one. This increase of social recognition of children's world perception contributed to substantial interpretation expansion of "childishness", which ceased to be localized in only one age period and age group [7].

The postponed adulthood practice appeals to non-reproductivity. Reproductivity provides returnable solutions to typical everyday tasks and choices of well-known, familiar, repeatedly traversed path. The person, whose reproductive practices prevail, is not even considering features, which require some courage to take risks and test something new [9]. But kidults are creative and live their lives ready for adventures. In this way kidults overcome the power of traditions, where maturity is associated with productivity, discipline and individual responsibility. Instead of any nostalgia for the times of their youth they feel themselves very comfortable here and now, in the days of feminism, mass celebrity culture, and contemporary consumerism [4].

Really, calls for greater responsibility and commitment in the young age seem particularly ironic at a time when most of the existing templates of maturity have already declared bankruptcy [4]. Kidults show the world that

their life-creational practices are in the continuum between the poles of quiet, habitual life, and stormy, unexpected, risky life [9].

There are some statements concerning kidults' characteristics which are comfortably embedded into the concept of unstable postmodern times. Kidults can frequently react to their desires, which is more influenced by the *impetus* than by the reason. Their sense of *dependency* prevails over the search for independence. As the contemporary time is inevitably marked by the dimensions of *doubt* and uncertainty, they tend to ask *more questions* and show more *search activities*. Kidults also prefer *immediate gratification* instead of future benefits, and choose *instantaneous pleasure* instead of long-term happiness. They put themselves and their *own problems in the center of individual experience*, disregard the presence and interests of others, and are often convinced that everything is allowed to them. They *claim their rights* instead of thinking about their obligations. Kidults are the ones who decide to go and live on their own with their partner or friends, and then decide to *return to the family nest*; they prefer the temporariness of various cohabitations rather than ostensible inalterability of marriage; they are also the ones who *get divorced and get married again*. Kidults are *presentists*: they focus their attention almost exclusively on the *day-to-day* dimension and are unable to make long-term projections, and conduct necessary to overcome the insecurity and anxiety related to the vision of the future. Their vision of life is *predominantly individualistic*, it seems hard to feel themselves as relatives, companions, lovers, citizens or members of a community – they don't like the certain designations. On the contrary, kidults also *chase the standardized trends and desires of the youths*; they suppress the variety, singularity and distinctiveness of their own persona in favor of an extraordinarily universal youth culture to enjoy the same identical products - tangible or intangible, regardless of age and nationality [1].

Objectively, kidults have all the advantages of adults but only few of their duties. And this is what “not accepting”-society can learn from them. These Carlsons and Peter Pans with their pulsatory, dynamic life-creational practices can be the key for overcoming cognitive conservatism and institutional inertia, for fighting the systems of tenure and promotion, bureaucracies and outdated class values.

Previous socio-psychological discourses were convincing that one should perceive the reality as the doubtless objectivity, but postmodern discourse assures that we need to catch the conventional and simulative meanings of reality [8]. In this worldview, only conventional commitments – the most normative forms of social and cultural practices – can be truly mature and responsible [4].

The only possibility to overcome negative trends which kidults can face is the gradual dissemination of ideas about what responsibility is in contemporary life. The media could be a cornerstone in solving this problem,

but marketing economics and exploitation of deficit needs do not allow to rely on the constructive personality potential. The promotion of infantilization by the market has the aspiration to foster the regression of the consumer's desires in order to make them more compatible with a capitalist logic based on surplus production and equality of the products. If the consumer culture leads, the counterculture should come, and it is able to overcome consumptive mainstream, but remembers the values of postmodernism.

Traditionally, discipline, diligence, and severeness are associated with control instances concept, account of opportunities, and measures for taking responsibility. But, as mentioned above, postmodern responsibility is not synonymous with the meaning of classical responsibility. Ethics and socio-psychological meaning of responsibility in the postmodern culture context fit into the concept of responsibility in the face of the Other [6]. Like this goal-setting is linked to the development and consolidation of responsibility, it becomes addressed to the Other and shared with the Other, and the specific aims of realization contributes to the coherent and understandable building of "I"-authorship to overcome an identity crisis. Postmodern responsibility is the ability to move towards the Other regardless of his/her positive or negative attitude towards Me. A person with such responsibility does not oppose itself to the society, and expresses itself within existing social order and, moreover, is interested in its support.

Thus, the idea of responsibility versus irresponsibility can be spread by means of reference groups. We can see the potential of transition to the responsible personality functioning in the creation of communities where the sense of belonging to the network would be the main driver as continuous symbolic access to support resources.

Connections, networking as the means of interaction and communication, and the method of social integration, and both sources of interest conflicts, have always existed. Being offline for postmodern mind would mean being out of society, out of civilized progress, out of culture magistrals, bringing the chaos and uncertainty of the future into one's life.

In postmodernity the community is the one to decide the legitimacy and the validity of spreading thoughts, and postmodern instability may pacify exactly by means of community which opens to personality identity mirrors and capabilities to juggle them, receiving continual feedback.

Those are networking and feedback to become basic principles for creating community. Thus, kidults usually live by depthless standards, hiding behind the facade of artificial sociality which is virtual reality and online social networks. In a case of community work, on the contrary, this virtuality is to reinforce the networking and become a tool for goals achieving. And each participant will receive real support to overcome existential estrangement, because those who avoid proximity require group work more than others (K. Rudestam).

Although incorporation of some of these postmodern features is already widely used in various communities (mainly with commercial interests); the application of postmodern ideas to responsibility context has not yet been put into kidults' practices. Thus, based on these features of today's young adults, postmodernity characteristics, the approach to the irresponsibility regulation, and the author's vision of their practical realization, we can achieve efficiency in socio-psychological work with kidults.

The global aim of a number of projects that could embrace the ideas of rethinking and reusing kidults' irresponsibility is the prevention of the trend towards ageing of population due to significant quantitative superiority of older generation over the young one (the rapid decline in the birth rate among the middle and upper classes in the developed countries). In addition, the kidults as those who make trends can provide a role model among other members of society. Conditions must be created in which kidults would be able to achieve their immediate goals and find their own strategies for dealing with uncertainty as soon as possible in order to start a family and give birth to children. Thus, multiplying the number of representatives of the middle class as potentially wealthy individuals will take place through changes in personal intentions and by increasing the birth rate.

So, the goal of the possible project is evaluation of the community effectiveness in reducing the level of irresponsibility of kidults through networking, collaborative action and intensification of the local identity of the project participants.

The central hypothesis of the project might be that young people with distinctive features of kidults will demonstrate a higher level of personal responsibility and achievement of previously set goals after weekly group meetings during few months.

After conducting this research, there will be a clear measure of the proposed community effectiveness, and such schemes of work will be possible for usage and dissemination in a broader social context.

Specific aims can be the following:

- universalization of the diagnostics for the features of kidults;
- popularization of networking and coworking through the activities of the community;
- dissemination of ideas about credibility of achieving personal goals;
- the transformation of kidults' ideas about personal responsibility;
- fixing kidults ability to set goals;
- implementation of the usage of contacts networks during the goals realization in everyday practice of kidults;
- make kidults' perception of their own achievements positive, and increase the level of their personal responsibility.

Using knowledge about postmodernity in the practice of social and psychological support and correction can provide new viewpoint in specific structure of community meetings and everyday support of participants through the creation of a network of contacts. The group membership can be used as a facilitating factor in the achievement of specific goals by the members, and increase their personal responsibility.

Carrying out research within postnonclassical paradigm, we focus on the tools, instruments, quality materials, which lead to scientific interdisciplinarity and search for pragmatic and social interactions. Methodologically, the project should use a systemic approach as a method to explain the interrelations and mutual influence of personality and society (L. von Bertalanffy, J. Habermas, N. Luhmann); social constructivism as a presumption of the idea that reality is constructed by people themselves (P. Berger, J. Bruner, T. Luckmann); the concept of psychological practices as a presentation of the variety of ways for personal construction and transformation of the world in terms of everyday life (T. Tytarenko, O. Kochubeynyk, K. Cheremnykh). Empirical implementation of the project should be based on the theory of group dynamics of K. Lewin as the deployment of the collective processes in the group, and the concept of group meetings of C. Rogers as an instrument to facilitate trusting relationships between people.

The scheme of the project realization might be the following:

1. Determination of the expressiveness level of the kidults' features among respondents (diagnostic tools designing).
2. Determination of the ways to conduct diagnostics of responsibility level as a personality trait (selection of methods).
3. Specific participants selection (experimental and control groups formation).
4. Criteria elaboration for the future community evaluation (primary indicators fixation).
5. Participants' practice of implementation of goals setting (involvement of the participants of the experimental group into community; instructing the control group how to use S.M.A.R.T. technology).
6. Establishing the leader position in the community (hierarchisation; the beginning of community functioning).
7. Making group decisions; expanding community boundaries (control; establishing interpersonal contacts and trusting relations).
8. Community teambuilding; achieving the intermediate aims (conflict situations overcoming).
9. Overcoming the resistance to self-revelation; working on negative patterns of behaviour (roles changing and influence of community members on the behaviour).

10. Formation of needs to join; expression of empathy, and support (implementation of community values in the structure of personality).

11. Transformation of participants' views on their own effectiveness (participants' final goals achievement).

12. Implementation of the contacts network resource in everyday life of participants (postponing group dissolution).

13. Analysis of the community effectiveness (providing the second diagnostics in experimental and control groups; applying evaluation criteria).

Conclusions. Dealing with contemporary 20-40-year-old kidults is a very urgent problem as they seem to spread the practices of irresponsibility which can lead to the lack of a role model for future generations, the birth rate declining, and depletion of social and natural resources. The basic product, which appears as the result of the project on regulation of irresponsibility implementation should become kidults' everyday practice of using self-development communities. Implementation of the project will open up perspectives for further research of the problem in the developed and developing countries, providing the opportunity for making comparison and expanding range of regulation of kidults' irresponsibility. Thus, we can shift the discussion to a larger stage: from individuals who became responsible and communities towards corporative, collaborative and post-national forms of responsibility.

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Дворник М. С. Римейкінг безвідповідальності кідалтів: постмодерний погляд

Представлено теоретичну дискусію щодо нової соціально-психологічної постагі постмодерну – кідалта – сучасної “20-40-річної дитини”, представника середніх і вищих прошарків суспільства, який орієнтується на молодіжні цінності, несвідомо заперечуючи власний вік, і демонструє нестачу мотивації в досягненні класичних показників дорослості: незалежності, сімейності та кар’єри. Постульовано, що кідалтизм стає нормальною і зрозумілою повсякденною практикою і що

попередні парадигми дорослості вже не можуть бути використаними для характеристики сучасних практик життєконструювання. Просувається ідея про те, що провідну роль слід визнати за конвенціями як істинно відповідальними психологічними, соціальними і культурними практиками постмодерну. Як інструмент подолання негативних трендів поширення кідалтизму представлено проектну пропозицію, засновану на створенні нетворкінг-спільноти. Проект містить 13-крокову схему реалізації і спирається на принципи системного підходу, соціального конструктивізму, концепту психологічних практик, теорії групової динаміки і підходу К. Роджерса до групових зустрічей.

Ключові слова: безвідповідальність, життєконструювання, інфантилізм, кідалт, кідалтизм, незрілість, постмодерн.

Дворник М. С. Римейкинг безответственности кидалтов: постмодернистский взгляд

Представлена теоретическая дискуссия о новой социально-психологической фигуре постмодернизма – кидалте – современном “20-40-летнем ребенке”, представителе средних и высших слоев общества, который ориентируется на молодежные ценности, неосознанно отрицая собственный возраст, и демонстрирует недостаток мотивации в достижении классических показателей взрослости: независимости, семейности и карьеры. Постулировано, что кидалтизм становится нормальной и понятной повседневной практикой и что предыдущие парадигмы взрослости уже не могут быть использованы для характеристики современных практик жизнеконструирования. Продвигается идея о том, что ведущую роль следует признать за конвенциями как истинно ответственными психологическими, социальными и культурными практиками постмодернизма. В качестве инструмента преодоления негативных трендов распространения кидалтизма представлено проектное предложение, основанное на создании нетворкинг-сообщества. Проект содержит 13-шаговую схему реализации и следует принципам системного подхода, социального конструктивизма, концепта психологических практик, теории групповой динамики и подхода К. Роджерса к групповым встречам.

Ключевые слова: безответственность, жизнеконструирование, инфантилизм, кидалт, кидалтизм, незрелость, постмодернизм.