



## Review Article

UDC 159.9:364-785.14:316.61

# PROBLEMS OF THE ADAPTIVE APPROACH TO THE SOCIALIZATION OF PERSONALITY

*Shvalb Yuri*

### Abstract

*Relevance.* In situations of forced resettlement, most Ukrainians demonstrate active adaptation to new living conditions, but they may not develop a psychological state of internal balance and well-being. The reason for this is communication difficulties, the migrant's inability to integrate into local communities. This raises the problem of "social adaptation-maladaptation" - the leading mechanism of interaction between an individual and a new social environment.

*Methodology.* To prove the hypothesis: long-term psychological maladaptation leads to the marginalization of the individual and the formation of special marginal communities, it should be assumed that 1) subjective indicators of an individual's adaptability in a group are: a) understanding of the system of relationships and role relations in the group; b) acceptance of one's own role, accompanied by a sense of emotional comfort; c) experiencing a state of personal well-being in this environment; 2) the degree of adaptation - maladaptation of a person depends on: the significance of changes in the objective circumstances of life and subjective readiness for self-change.

*Results.* Four limitations of the adaptive paradigm of socialization have been identified: 1) in difficult life circumstances, adaptation allows an individual to survive, but the quality of his life is significantly reduced and there is a threat of consolidating unproductive life strategies. 2) adaptation does not always lead to an increase in the well-being of the individual and can become a significant factor in his neurotization. 3) the reverse side of adaptation is the marginalization of the individual and the formation of marginal communities. Adaptation performs a stabilizing function in society, but also acts as a limitation for the development of personality and social innovation. An important addition to the adaptation model of socialization should be the idea of social integration of the individual.

**Keywords:** *adaptation approach, resocialization, social maladaptation, social integration of the individual.*

### Relevance

In situations of forced resettlement, most Ukrainians demonstrate active adaptation to



new living conditions, but they may not develop a psychological state of internal balance and well-being. The reason for this is communication difficulties, the migrant's inability to integrate into local communities. This raises the problem of "social adaptation-maladaptation" - the leading mechanism of interaction between an individual and a new social environment.

There are many different scientific models that describe the interaction of an individual with the environment. Among them, the predominant models are those based on the natural science approach developed in the general biological understanding of Darwin's theory of evolution, where the category of "adjustment" or "adaptation" becomes the key concept. According to this model, adaptation is an individual process of changing the quality of interaction between an individual and the environment, which results in bringing this interaction into a state of certain equilibrium.

Two points are important for understanding this process. First, certain changes that occur in the environment regardless of the individual's life activities, and which act as objective factors of the need for changes on the part of the individual, are considered primary. Secondly, adaptation implies that an individual has a certain internal mechanism as the ability to change, that is defined through the concept of "adaptability". The importance of these provisions lies in the fact that here adaptation and adaptability are considered in a purely reactive sense, that is, the individual does not act as a subject of change, but is only a carrier of the ability to respond to external changes.

In a general psychological sense, adaptation is viewed in a similar way: as a process and as an individual's ability to change ideas and forms of behavior in accordance with changing conditions and circumstances of life. At the conceptual level, this is reflected through the categories "adaptability", "flexibility". However, the psychological understanding of adaptation is somewhat different from the biological one. Without going into details, we can single out at least three distinctive features. In classical biology, adaptation is considered to be the leading mechanism of the evolution of living nature, while in psychology it is seen as a mechanism for achieving well-being in interaction with the environment. In biology, it is believed that adaptation takes place mainly through morphological changes, which are fixed at the genetic level, and in psychology - mainly due to changes in the functional characteristics of unchanged psychological structures. In biology, the inability to adapt to changes means death as the physical disappearance of an organism, a population, or an entire species, while psychology introduces a special concept of "maladaptation" (respectively, "maladjustment") as a concept that captures the negative state of a person in relation to the life situation.

The very concept of maladaptation becomes one of the key ones for building various psychological practices, because it is believed that any person has the ability to adapt by default, but situationally may turn out to be unable to change quickly and effectively enough in response to changing circumstances and the demands of the environment. At the same time, it has been proven that the degree of maladjustment directly depends on two factors: the significance (cardinality) of changing the objective circumstances of life

and the subjective readiness for self-change. Numerous studies and practice in the conditions of various disasters and war have shown both the validity and limitations of this model.

This limitation was manifested in the fact that in situations of forced resettlement, people show a sufficiently high level of adaptability to new living conditions, but they may not develop a psychological state of internal balance and well-being. The reason for such discrepancy and "gap" is their inability or difficulty in entering local communities and establishing and maintaining communication ties. This problem was interpreted through the concept of "social adaptation" as the leading socio-psychological mechanism of interaction between an individual and a new social environment.

In general, three main approaches to understanding social adaptation can be distinguished. First, it is a sociological approach which emphasises the need for an individual to conform to social values and norms. At the same time, values are considered as basic moral and ideological guidelines that are fixed in various forms, from formally official to informally traditional. And norms, predominantly - as what is fixed at the legislative level. Secondly, it is an institutional approach, where adaptation is considered as the entry of an individual into any organization. Here, the key concepts are the ability of a person to fulfill organizational and operational requirements (professional adaptation) and follow the norms of organizational culture. Thirdly, this is actually a psychological approach, where adaptation is considered through the interaction of an individual and a group, as the ability to learn and apply new norms and rules of group behavior at all levels of the organization of social interaction. The concept of a group, regardless of the way it is defined (formal – informal; organized – spontaneous; established – random; large – small, etc.) appears as an analogue of the concept of environment and, accordingly, as a determinant of individual behavior. Socio-psychological adaptation, as the "entry" of an individual into a group, involves the presence of two complementary processes: the individual must "accept" the rules of interaction established in this particular group as a setting for organizing his own behavior and interactions with other members of the group, regardless of the content of his own views and rules of life, and the group must "accept" the individual as a member of the group.

This means that at the individual and psychological level, such adaptation involves a certain loss of their own values that formed the basis of their personal identity. Such a loss can occur in two forms: through the rejection of a part of the identity and adoption of another value as the basis of a new identity, or through the concealment of real life values and the declarative acceptance of a new identity (which is recorded in social psychology in the concept of conformity). We should also add that in sociology and psychology, this discrepancy between the rules followed by an individual in a group and his personal values is accepted as one of the fundamentals and recorded in various theories of social roles.

And now we can determine the subjective indicators of an individual's adaptability to any group: 1) understanding of the system of relationships and role relations in the group; 2) emotional acceptance of one's role, accompanied by a sense of comfort; 3) experiencing a state of personal well-being in this environment.



At the metaphorical level of everyday consciousness, the general formula of the subjective experience of the state of adaptation can be formulated as follows: "I now understand what's going on here (how everything is happening) and I can settle in well."

However, as we have already pointed out, social adaptation, unlike environmental adaptation, is a two-way process, i.e. it occurs not only on the side of the individual, but also on the side of the group. In short, the internal group mechanism of adaptation is the "acceptance" procedure, which is manifested in the group's symbolic definition of a person as "our person", i.e. as one who recognizes our internal norms and rules. Therefore, the efforts of group members are constantly directed at maintaining internal views and rules, in an attempt to stabilize them, make them established and "unbreakable". It is essential that this state of "acceptance" of the individual by the group is a very dynamic entity that must be constantly confirmed, because otherwise the reverse process of "throwing" the individual out of the group may unfold.

This analysis of adaptation processes will be incomplete if we do not dwell on the problem of social maladaptation in more detail. This is a real problem, because people who are incapable of full-fledged social adaptation do not disappear and continue to live among other people. At the psychological level, the signs of maladjustment are well known and studied. As a rule, they include various psychopathic manifestations, increased aggressiveness and conflict, communication disorders and deterioration of psychosomatic conditions. But the social consequences of maladaptation remain almost unexplored, and today, as a result of the war, the Ukrainian population for the first time encountered a situation where social maladaptation became a mass phenomenon and, accordingly, a global problem.

### **Methodology**

As a preliminary hypothesis, we can express the thesis that persistent social maladaptation leads to the marginalization of the individual and the formation of special marginal communities. Unlike the processes of adaptation, marginalization is very poorly studied in domestic psychology, but it can still be argued that this process has a significant socio-psychological and social component. The fact is that marginalized individuals begin to form groups and even whole communities, which are institutionalized on a formal or informal level and, ultimately, change the social structure of society. Such a marginalized social structure of society becomes a new powerful factor in the deployment of adaptation processes in the next generations - the circle closes and we get a mechanism of self-reproduction of marginality, but no longer at the individual level, but at the societal level, at the level of social mechanisms of personality socialization. The dangers of such marginalization of society have been discussed in European and American sociology for 30 years, but for us it is actually a new problem and it can become extremely relevant as a result of the war.

### **Results**

Thus, a brief analysis of the adaptive paradigm of personality socialization revealed the

presence of at least three significant limitations. First, in difficult life circumstances, adaptation allows the individual to survive, but the quality of life is significantly reduced and there is a threat of establishing unproductive life strategies. Secondly, adaptation does not always lead to an increase in the well-being of an individual and, moreover, can become a significant factor in his neurotization. Thirdly, the reverse side of adaptation is the marginalization of the individual and the formation of marginal communities.

To this, we would add one more, the fourth point, which in our opinion is the main one. The fact is that adaptation processes certainly perform a stabilizing function in society, but this very function acts as a limitation both for the development of personal creative potential and for social innovation. The focus on adaptation as the leading mechanism of socialization leads to the priority of the processes of reproduction of any norms and rules, and their reproduction itself becomes a social value, and the real content is diluted or recedes "into the background". It is precisely as a result of this focus that we massively receive paradoxical facts when people get into the real space of development and achievements "not thanks to, but in spite of" the efforts of numerous institutions and agents of socialization.

Perhaps it can be argued that the general reason for the limitation of the adaptation approach is that it actually ignores the activity side of the individual's social existence. It is obvious that in order to take into account this component, it is necessary to introduce a new category that will complement the adaptation model of socialization. In our opinion, the concept of social integration of the individual can become such a category.

## References

Vasyutyns'kyi, V. O. (2017). Indyvidual'ni i kolektyvni stratehiyi adaptatsiyi meshkantsiv mis'kykh hromad do zhyttya v period voyennoho konfliktu [Individual and collective strategies adaptation residents urban communities to life in the period military of conflict]. *Problemy politychnoyi psykholohiyi : zb. nauk. prats'*. – K.: Milenium. Vyp. (19). – 43–52 pp.

Korobka, L.M. (Ed) (2019). Spil'nota v umovakh voyennoho konfliktu: psykholohichni stratehiyi adaptatsiyi : kolektyvna monohrafiya [Community in conditions military conflict : psychological strategies adaptations : collective monograph] *Natsional'na akademiya pedahohichnykh nauk Ukrainy, Instytut sotsial'noyi ta politychnoyi psykholohiyi. – Kropyvnyts'kyi : Imeks-LTD, 2019 – 286 p.*[In Ukrainian]

Shvalb, YU.M. (2020). Psykholohichni mekhanizmy sotsializatsiyi osobystosti v ontogenezi. xPsychological mechanisms socialization personality in ontogenesis. Monohrafiya – K.: Litera Nova. 214 p. [In Ukrainian]

Shvalb, YU.M. (2015). Psykholohichni modeli sotsializatsiyi osobystosti [Psychological models socialization personalities.] *Aktual'ni problemy psykholohiyi - K.: Natsional'na akademiya pedahohichnykh nauk Ukrainy, Instytut psykholohiyi imeni HS Kostyuka. T-7. Vyp. 38 – 503-517 pp.*



## AUTHORS INFORMATION

**Shvalb Yuri**

*Doctor of Sciences in Psychology, Professor,  
Professor of the Social Work Department, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv  
Kyiv, Ukraine*

*ORCID ID:0000 0001 9110 3651,*

*shwalb2012@ukr.net*

**Competing interests:** Any competing interests were declared by author.

**Disclaimer:** The author declares that her opinions and views expressed in this manuscript are free of any impact of any organizations.

## ABOUT THIS ARTICLE

### Cite this article

*Shvalb Yuri* PROBLEMS OF THE ADAPTIVE APPROACH TO THE SOCIALIZATION. 2023. Socialization & Human Development journal 2. DOI 10.37096/SHDISJ-23-1.2-0006

Submitted on 23 Jul 2023 / Revised 30 Sep 2023 / Approved 14 Nov 2023

Published: **20 Nov 2023**

**DOI:** 10.37096/SHDISJ-23-1.2-0006

**Managing editor** - *Yaroslav Ryabchych.*

## RIGHTS AND PERMISSIONS

**Copyright:** © 2023 *Shvalb Yuri* This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.