# Specific Phenomena of Cognition: Predictors of Life Strategies

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**ABSTRACT:** The problem field of the presented study includes understudied sociopsychological aspects of attribution in various life situations of an individual. Often, ignorance of the psychological fundamentals of one's own behavior and behavior of other people leads to unintentional errors that can lead to the most serious consequences. Attributive processes in the range of such potential reasons take one of the first places. It is for these reasons that this study is important both in theoretical and in scientific and practical aspects. The paper presents the results of a theoretical and methodological analysis of the problem of cognitive phenomena of knowledge: predictors of life scenarios in a dimension of attribution. The following indicators of assessing life events have been formulated: a type of event, inclusion in the situational context, self-assessment by a person of the significance and emotional coloring of the event, the structure of inter-event relationships and the role of the event in this structure. The research tools have been determined that are used to study the person's life path, his life strategies and alternatives based on biographical methods of personality research. A program has been designed for the application of psychological diagnostic methods in the study of life events of an individual. To study the life path of an individual, his life strategies and alternatives, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive study, including applied technologies for modeling



the life path of an individual in comparison with the norms and types obtained statistically in large samples. It has been proved that the psychological space of the personality of an individual from the point of view of the attributive approach is multi-alternative and multi-tiered. A negative consequence of variability is a constant distortion: the prevalence in the processes of understanding and interpretation of another person of the estimated component; a low level of reflection, accompanied by resistance to awareness of the causes of their difficulties and unwillingness to change anything in his behavior.

**Keywords:** phenomena of cognition, attributive processes, predictors of life strategies, attribution errors.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The phenomenon of attribution is one of the most interesting and significant one, both from the point of view of science and practice of mental phenomena. This phenomenon acquires special social significance in connection with the occurrence of errors, which are based on the attribution mechanism. Identification of the role of attributive processes, factors and mechanisms of their occurrence makes it possible to identify potential "stress points" that are critical in activity and, consequently, to stop possible errors by building human activity in various fields (Efimova et al., 2018; Mitin et al., 2018). In the contemporary world, a unique situation has developed where activities and decisions made by a person can significantly change the surrounding reality, affect tens, hundreds and even thousands of lives of other people. With the changed area of responsibility, technical means, the human psyche remained almost unchanged (Bonkalo, Erofeeva & Gorokhova, 2008; Eniashina et al., 2018; Ishkov, 2014).

The course of personal and professional development is always multidimensional, contradictory. Often, the transition to the next stage is associated with the experience of the crisis, the search for ways to overcome it. And here, models and theories are of particular importance that provide not only an assessment of the factors of experience and overcoming the psychological crisis, but also a comprehensive analysis of human life events (Erofeeva et al., 2019; Goloshumova et al., 2019b; Salakhova et al., 2019; Kalinina et al., 2018). The problem of attributive processes is debatable, but there are very few works of a fundamental generalizing nature that could introduce a more or less rigorous scientific substantiation of the circle of identified problems. The proposed study compensates for the lack of comprehension of the characteristics of the attributive processes of the subject, not only in stable social conditions, but also in situations where the individual is forced to act due to his internal characteristics.

### METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In psychology, a large amount of work has been done in theoretical and practical aspects in the study of certain types of attributive process. For instance, in their abstract review O.A. Gulevich and I.K. Bezmenova (1998), relying on the works of foreign authors, gives the following definition of attribution, which has already become generally accepted. Attribution (in English attribute means to ascribe, to assign) is understood as attributing characteristics to social objects that are not directly represented in the field of perception.

In social psychology of our country attribution has been studied since the late 70s of the 20th century. First of all, it was considered as a mechanism of many social



processes. At the same time, the role of attribution was also shown in intergroup interaction and in the regulation of marital relations, and in the emergence of industrial conflicts and so on. It was shown in the works of domestic authors that in groups of the highest level of development, this phenomenon is adequate to the real contribution of group members to the outcome of the activity. It is true that along with this, in theories of casual attribution attention is paid to the idea of contrast images when negative traits are attributed to a "bad" person, and the perceiver evaluates himself by contrast as the bearer of the most positive traits. All experimental studies of this kind brought up an extremely important question of a more general plan - the question of the role of an attitude in the process of perceiving a person by another person (Mikhaylova, 2013). This role is especially significant in the formation of the first impression of a stranger which was found in the experiments of A.A. Bodalev (1982).

A.V. Yurevich (1984) was one of the researchers who dealt with the analysis of casual explanations in Russian psychology. On the basis of the data that is indicative of the rigidity and stability of the attribution process as well as the multifunctional character of the attribution process, he formulated the idea of the functioning of reference schemes of causality learned in the process of socialization. A.B. Orlov (1990) studied causality patterns in learning. In his opinion, the most favorable type of attribution that needs to be developed in a child is the type of attribution of one's own efforts. It is this cause of success that is under willful control of the subject, and, consequently, it forms the only causal scheme that does not form students' self-doubt, lack of confidence in their capabilities to improve their own results. A.N. Onuchin (1999) dealt with the problem of attribution in domestic social psychology. In his opinion, a person evaluates other people not only by their free and intentional behavior, forced and unintentional actions also contain information about the person who performed them. If a person does harm to the people around unintentionally, moral responsibility is attributed to him for this (Mikhaylova, 2013).

In social psychology of foreign countries there are many studies and approaches the problem of attribution. O.A. Gulevich and I.K. Bezmenova (1998) in their abstract review describe several types of attribution that have already become classic: causal attribution and self-attribution, attribution of responsibility, emotions, motivational attribution, social and spontaneous attribution. At present, Western researchers are studying attribution in different areas, in particular, as the cultural environment of the formation of the attributive process, and the general laws of attribution. For instance, a number of authors considered the attributive aspects of automatisms in a cultural environment. The fundamental task that social perception faces is to identify the causes underlying the behavior of other people. The data indicates that residents of Eastern Asia more often than residents of Western countries refer to the social context when explaining the causes of other people's actions (causal attribution). The current question is whether culture affects automatic components of the attribution process, the controlled components or both, the controlled components, or both. Contemporary foreign authors also study general patterns of the casual attribution formation and self-attribution. selfattribution. For example, A.A. Quiamzade from the University of Geneva, Switzerland and I.P. L'Huillier from the University of Massachusetts, USA (Quiamzade & L'Huillier, 2009), studied the situation when frontmen performed unusual, transcending actions with investment, and how these actions were copied by others (Mikhaylova, 2018).



# **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**The Coordinates of Assessing Life Events of a Person

Theoretical and applied models that reproduce not only the main stages of the life path (the unit of analysis, as a rule, is an event), but also subjective meanings, emotional and value changes at each stage, are most widely used in the studies of attributive processes. In our study, we relied on a number of definitions proposed by L.F. Burlachuk and E.Yu. Korzhova (1998). In general, the life events approach is understood here as a tendency, which has been formed since the 70s of the 20th century, to study the uniqueness of each person's life path, and to include the tasks of studying the life path into the psychology problems of personality development, "the basis of which can be specific to life (biographical) events in which social phenomena and, on the other hand, psychophysiological processes are experienced by the individual. The way of experiencing events determines the psychological fate of a person".

The key concepts here are "situation", "event", "behavior strategy". The phenomenon of the situation itself is so ambiguous that it is difficult to give a single definition: in a general sense, this is a natural segment of social life, determined by the people involved in it, the place of action, the essence of activity; this is a set of environmental elements (Magnusson, 1983; Argyle, 2001; Furnham & Argyle, 1981 etc.); this is a system of subjective and objective elements that are combined in the activities of the subject, at the same time "the levels of psychological representation of the situation are described depending on the degree of completeness of representation in a holistic picture of the world." The authors distinguish two approaches to the analysis of situations: from the point of view of the structure of the situation (Pervin & John, 2001; Alpeisso, et al, 2018; Ardakani, et al, 2015; Jaramillo, 2018). and from the point of view of the content of the situation (Forgas, 1995), as well as the third approach proposed by D. Magnusson (1983) - according to which the analysis of the situation combines three aspects: perceptual, motivational and reactive. The second group of definitions is associated with the concept of "life event".

Table 1 presents one of the simplest classifications in which individual characteristics of events are correlated. R.R. Popova (2011) made an attempt to generalize current trends in understanding this category in psychology. The author considers two options for the correlation of the concepts of "event" and "situation", such as equalization of concepts and how to consider the event as a structural element of the situation. Then the conclusion follows about the main results of the psychological analysis of the concept of "event": this is a significant change for the subject in the surrounding reality, in his behavior and inner world".

**Table 1.** Event Analysis: Types of Events

Types of events and their causality			
Man, in the outer world: a vector of interaction	The inner world of man: a vector of reflection		
1. Events of the environment (Ananyev, 1980)	1. Events of the inner life (Loginova, 2001)		
2. Events of human behavior in the environment (Ananyev, 1980)	2. Life event as a situation of self-determination of a person (Kartseva, 1990)		
3. Normative events (Zeer, 2003)	3. Acmeological event (Markov, 2007)		



The difference of an event from actions of a person is emphasized: life events are situations of self-determination of a person, key moments and turning stages of an individual's life path, when a person's life path is determined with a decision made for a more or less long period (Rubinstein, 1989). L.F. Burlachuk and E.Yu. Korzhov (1998) compare events by significance, emotional richness and power of influence, degree of anticipation and retrospection, etc. L.F. Burlachuk and E.Yu. Korzhova (1998) define behavioral strategies in significant situations as "special behavioral syndromes characterized by actualization of adaptive mechanisms of mental self-regulation". The authors also propose to divide behavioral strategies in life situations into somatic, personality and socially oriented forms of behavior, and consider the forms of total orientation of a person as productive and unproductive as the most general classification. Life strategies are also considered as a special class of personality orientations (Salakhova et al., 2018b). They are divided by the nature of their vital activity. Table 2 presents the typological characteristic of life strategies in relation to the type of personality orientations.

**Table 2.** Typological characteristic of life strategies (proposed by T.E. Reznik and Yu.M. Reznik (1995) and cited in an abridged version)

Components	Main types of life strategies		
of life strategies of a person	Strategies of life well-being	Strategies of success in life	Strategies of self- actualization in life
1. Perceptual orientations	Financially secure, calm, steady life	Active, eventful, socially significant life	Beautiful, harmonious, creative life
2. Meaning of life orientations	The acquisition and consumption of goods, the pursuit of material or psychological comfort	Climbing up to the desired, publicly recognized and financially beneficial peak (level) of life	Free creativity and self-improvement achieved through changing the world of life
3. Value orientations	Striving to obtain and use a significant set of vital benefits for the individual	Achieving mastery, high professionalism and competence in the chosen field of activity and qualities that correspond to professionally important personality traits	Striving for personal autonomy and creative condition; a tendency towards constant search for alternatives and indepth self-reflection
4. Normative orientations	Adoption of principles and rules establishing the priority of certain benefits in life	Adoption of principles and rules conducive to personal and professional growth, promotion on the social ladder	Lack of strictly established rules in compliance with generally accepted standards; respect for freedom and other people's lifestyles



5. Goal
orientations
(Naumov
& Savitski,
2019)

Striving for the greatest possible or permissible satisfaction of their needs for certain life benefits

Identification and achievement of wideranging goals with a transformative focus and leading to success

The limited use of goal setting as an instrument of concretization and practical embodiment of life meanings of an individual

The result of an unproductive life strategy can be a crisis of an individual's personality. R.A. Akhmerov (2002), exploring the biographical crises of an individual's personality, points out to evets and inter-event relation as factors determining them;

- crisis of unfulfillment a subjective negative experience of a life program;
- crisis of emptiness emotional fatigue and experiences of lack of achievements;
- crisis of hopelessness lack of prospects for professional growth, real plans for the future.

The author also differentiates two life programs: "external", the purpose of which is socio-psychological adaptation to society; and "internal" - the purpose of which is selfactualization. These two identified types of life programs are related to the ideas of S.L. Frank (2000) and S.L. Rubinstein (1989), K.A. Abulkhanova-Slavskaya and T.N. Berezina (2001) and others. As a method of analyzing the life program specified in events-goals and events-consequences, A.A. Kronik and R.A. Akhmerov (2008) develops the methods for studying the subjective picture of a person's life path. The author considers the typology of eudemonistic attitudes (hedonistic, ascetic, active, contemplative), which characterize the area of objective activity in which a person strives to self-actualize, as well as how exactly with the help of psychological methods he tries to do it. A.A. Kronik and R.A. Akhmerov (2008) in the theory of a causal-goal concept also developed a typology of inter-event relationships that play a leading role in shaping the structure of the life path. A.A. Kronik and R.A. Akhmerov (2008) found that in the causograms describing the content of subjective pictures of the life path, there may be no inter-event connections belonging either to the past (realized), or to the present (actual), or to the future (potential connections). This phenomenon was called "motivational insufficiency". Thus, to analyze the subjective picture of the life path, it is necessary to consider 5 tiers (Kronik & Akhmerov, 2008):

- 1. composite (core)
- 2. reserve of experience and expectations (15)
- 3. the periphery of life (10-15 events that are most mobile)
- 4. Outside of these three tiers are:
- 5. values tier (super significant events)
- 6. background of occasional events (insignificant events).

Each group of events has both internal and external connections, thus ensuring the unity in the reconstruction of the individual's living space. We will summarize a certain intermediate result: there are quite a lot of indicators for assessing life events, based on the approaches discussed above: the type of event, inclusion in the situational context, a person's self-evaluation of the significance and emotional coloring of the event, the structure of inter-event relationships and the role of the event in this structure, etc. However, a logical question of a psychologist - practitioner arises: is there a toolkit for exploring a person's life path, his life strategies and alternatives, what is the current state



and prospects in the development of biographical methods of personality research? We will turn to the literature sources. For instance, N.A. Loginova (2001) writes that although there is a classification of biographical sources in literary criticism and historical science, it has not yet been developed in psychology. Taking account of the specificity of psychological research, N.A. Loginova (2001) considers four groups of sources. The first and second group are produced by the person under study:

- 1) his evidence of himself (autobiographical sources);
- 2) products of his activity, works.
- The third and fourth groups are produced by the people around:
- 3) official identity documents
- 4) evidence of those who personally knew and observed the person being studied in various situations and periods of his life.

The analysis showed some limitations of the use of the biographical method, in particular regarding the change in the social situation during the course of a person's life. This makes it difficult to unambiguously refer to a certain ethnocultural environment as well as it is necessary to take account of a high level of subjectivity of the method when using self-evaluating methods. These shortcomings can be corrected under the condition of conducting a comprehensive study, including the use of the results of applied technologies for modeling the life path of an individual in comparison with the norms and types obtained statistically in large samples.

**Table 3.** An example of the use of psychological diagnostic methods in the study of life events of a person

Blocks of characteristics	Evaluation indicators	Methods of evaluation
1	2	3
Block 1 – the level of external factors	Social situation of development	Formalized Biographical Questionnaire by N.A. Loginova (2001)
	Family situation Style of upbringing Social status	Questionnaire scales BIV "Biographisches Inventar zur Diagnose von Verhaltenstorungen" by Bottscher, Jager, Lischer (Chicker, 2006)
Block 2 – the level of	Perception efficiency of images of a life path	Technique "Psychological autobiography" proposed by L.F. Burlachuk and E.Yu. Korzhova (1998) (table 1)
significant events (the combination of situational and significant factors for a person)	Significance of events in life. Desirable – undesirable event	Ib. (table 2)
	The extent of influence of events	Ib. (table 3)
	Time of anticipation and retrospection	Ib. (table 4)
	Type and kind of significant events	Ib. (table 5)



	Inter-event connections	"Causometry", by A.A. Kronik	
	Power of «I»	and R.A. Akhmerov (2008)	
Block 3 - the level of individual and personal characteristics	Neurotism	Questionnaire scales BIV	
		"Biographisches Inventar zur	
	Social activity	Diagnose von	
	Psychophysical	Verhaltenstorungen"	
	constitution Extroversion	by Bottscher, Jager, Lischer	
		(Chicker, 2006)	
	The main background of		
	emotional experiences Value orientations,		
		Formalized Biographical	
	orientation, social activity of a person	Questionnaire by N.A. Loginova	
	The main driving forces	(2001)	
	of personality		
	development		
	Eudomonics		
	Life style		
	Subjective picture of the	"Causometry", by A.A. Kronik and R.A. Akhmerov (2008)	
	life path (5 tiers)		
	Psychobiographical crisis		
	Psychological age of a		
Block 4 – the level of	person		
cognitive and value	Formal and meaningful	The projective technique "Life	
characteristics of a	indicators of life values,	path" proposed by I.L. Solomin	
person	strategies and goal-	(2008).	
	setting process		
	Trans-situational		
	variability		
	Trans-situational locus of		
	control		
	Trans-situational	"Questionnaire of subject-object	
	orientation of world	orientations in life situations"	
	development	proposed by E.Yu. Korzhova.	
	Trans-situational	G.V. Semenova and M.S.	
	mobility	Volokhonskaya (2009).	
	Trans-situational		
	creativity		
	General characteristics of		
	a life orientation type		

The need for special methodological experiments in which the cognitive capabilities of different biographical methods are compared is great for the further development of the biographical method, (Loginova, 2001). One of the methods to assess the consistency of the subjective and objective "picture of the world" is the method of comparative analysis.



# Applied Aspects of the Study of "Errors of Subjectivity"

The search for an answer to the question about the cognitive prerequisites of forming life strategies has led researchers to the determination of the boundaries and functions of the personal space. I.B. Kotova (1994) understands the living space of a person's personality as "a complex, integrated psychological formation that is the result of the development of personality subjectivity". Depending on a component which is carried by the subject to the field of reflection, the correlation of this complex psychological structure is determined, the boundary of one's own and another "I" is determined. The attribution factor is so significant for the organization of the personal space that it can be considered as one of the principles of interpretation of the personality being. In the model proposed by V.A. Petrovsky (1981) three types of attribution were identified according to the ratio of the personal aspect of being with elements of a social community, such as individuals and subject-specific relationships between them:

- intraindividual personal attribution (interprets the personality as a quality inherent in the individual subject. The personal is immersed in the immediate space of the individual's being, and he himself appears as the only bearer of his personality);
- interindividual personal attribution (a person in the space of stable interpersonal relationships acquires his own being, different from the being of the individual);
- metaindividual personal attribution (a way of interpreting a person as a systemic quality - going beyond the limits of the subject's actual relationships with others, beyond the limits of joint activity).

Thus, the psychological space of the personality of an individual from the point of view of the attributive approach is multi-alternative and multi-tiered. A negative consequence of variability is constant distortion, or, as V.A. Labunskaya and P.N. Ermakov (2007) says "the escalation of attribution": the prevalence in the processes of understanding and interpretation of another person of the estimated component; a low level of reflection, accompanied by resistance to awareness of the causes of their difficulties and unwillingness to change anything in their behavior (Salakhova & Mikhaylova, 2017).

## **CONCLUSION**

Thus, the theoretical and methodological analysis of the problem allows us to draw the following conclusions. There are a lot of indicators for assessing life events, based on the approaches discussed above: the type of event, inclusion in a situational context, a person's self-esteem of the significance and emotional coloring of the event, the structure of inter-event interrelationships and the role of the event in this structure, etc. To study the life path of a person, his life strategies and alternatives it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive study, including applied technologies for modeling the life path of an individual in comparison with norms and types obtained statistically in large samples (Mitin et al., 2017; Goloshumova et al., 2019a; Mitina et al., 2017; Salakhova et al., 2018a). It is also necessary to note the importance of procedural characteristics, the result of which are erroneous conclusions, the authors turn to the very parameters of the cognitive picture of the world. A promising direction in modern cognitive psychology is an approach to the study of mental representations. Note that this direction is interdisciplinary, and the breadth of interpretation of the very concept of "representation" often leads to the reductionism of such models. Such contradictions are manifested both at the level of



psychological theory and its individual branches, and in the context of psychological practice in the development of technologies for personal and professional development.

In applied domestic studies, the actual mental representation of the situation is considered - "this is a mental information complex in which subjective and objective factors (conditions) that determine a subject's decision to solve a life problem" are presented. In modern psychological science, ways of mental representation of life situations are determined on the basis of the general level of significance of objective and subjective factors of the situation and their relationship. At the same time, a number of empirical interrelations have been established between optimal and non-optimal methods of mental representation of life situations with certain symptom complexes of qualities, in particular, with the level of subjective control and personality self-regulation styles - individual ways of a person's adaptation to various types of activity. The influence of a number of factors on the significance of the subjective and objective components of the situation in the content of mental representation is also proved.

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