

The Powerful People's Biographies Analysis for Modern Leaders' Identity Construction

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Abstract: In the article, the factors which influenced the world's most powerful people's biographies have been analysed, taking into consideration life's main features such as tendencies and risks of society's development, economy, globalization, politics, a material life model and a social and cultural environment. The aim of this research is to prove that the generalization of the world's most powerful people's life experiences is outlined as the tool of challenge for a modern leader's identity construction. A reconstruction of the person's biography has been created in the process of anthropological research. Analysing the life experience of many leaders, the authors of the article have declared that, despite the leaders' individual self-development strategy, attitude, behaviour and motivation of the specific character traits, it is possible to verify essential common features which make leaders special and unique. In the process of research, the generalization of the world's most powerful peoples' life experiences is outlined as the tool for the construction of the modern leader's identity. The study of the modern society's development reveals the necessity for the wider use of biography analysis methodology in anthropological and sociological researches. The method of biography analysis operates with data on a person's objective events and personal experiences. In the common world's context, a person is considered as a part of his/her lifetime, and his/her life "culmination" and "finish" depend on its "start" and "distance" running quality. Analysing biographies of great personalities and studying principles of their behaviour and major traits, contemporary leaders can apply the method of biographical analysis as a tool for constructing their identity. The experience and skills gained will become a vector for self-growth, self-empowerment, and transformation.

Keywords: leaders, leaders' identity, self-development, self-realization, biography analysis, psychology.

Introduction

Modern theories of individualization (Walsh, 1995; Giddens, 2013) prove that the modern era society gives individuals a new role. Previous forms of social organization offered social scenarios and expected that most individuals would follow them. Modern society imposes great responsibility on the people themselves in the choice of identity. The values which were providing a clear identity in the past such as social structures or classes, extended family, community, professional, long-term employment in one company are weakened. At the same time society exposes individuals to large amounts of information and offers identification and alternative ways of life. Instead, the design of "authentic" identification on the basis of multiple samples of identity that provides the consumer society is needed (Allport, 1942). Due to the complexity of the functioning of a modern society there is a need of a constant search of specific methods of the research.

It is believed that quantitative methods are the most optimal for mass society research. However, it should be noted that there are social problems that cannot be analysed without qualitative methods. Despite the great heuristic capabilities of this method, its methodological basis still requires proper consideration. The study of its specificity and application is the subject of this article analysis (Szczepanski, 1962). Formation and development of the biographical research method took place in several disciplines.

Biographical method is indispensable for ethnography, which has always shown interest in the description of prominent personalities. With this method, psychology and psychiatry intensively study the life of one person. Biography is very important, because the history of life is considered as a causal model, i.e. a person on a subconscious level builds his life, depending on the events that happened to him before, especially in childhood. Classical sociology focused mainly on social life and public adaptation of the individual (Daresh, 1995).

The history of life and human biography became relevant for the main areas of sociology, such as symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology and others. The biographical method first

time came into the study of sociology in the United States in the 1920s, then also into sociology in Poland and psychology in Austria. In the US, it had begun with a large study of Polish farmers in Europe and America, which was published in 1918-1920 by the Chicago sociologist William Thomas and his Polish counterpart F. Znaniecki. Such merit is given to these researchers, due to the fact that they collected biographical data relating to significant sociological and social psychological material. They believed that social processes must be seen as the result of a continuous interaction of consciousness of the individual and objective social reality.

Methodology and practice of sociological studies act as determinants and as products of social interaction. Therefore, the study of consciousness and self-awareness – is a necessary condition for the analysis of the social world. In addition, W. Thomas and F. Znaniecki assumed that research, based on the "life stories", will allow to reach a broader generalization concerning social groups, subcultures, classes, and so on (Beres, 1959). They developed their historical assumptions into their own kind of theories. One must take into account the objective and subjective factors of influence, if not to take into account the analysis of the "world of representations" of individuals, cannot explain why different people react differently to a given phenomenon. From the Chicago school came the whole direction of biographical research; the study of the cultural social problems of the immigrant groups, lifestyles of criminals and deviant groups, occurrences of crimes in societies, the problems within urban society, linguistic and cultural divergence (Robbins, Alvy, 2004).

The aim of this research is to prove that the generalization of the world's most powerful people's life experiences is outlined as the tool of challenge for a modern leader's identity construction.

Methodology

Conducting biographical research has specific features. Firstly, biographical research, according to M. Kohli (Kohli, 2009), should be in accordance with the following regulations:

- It should give an outlook of the life of the individual as a whole;
- must take into account the relationship of the individual's life history and the society;
- comprehend the interpretative activity of the actors of everyday life (Figure 1).

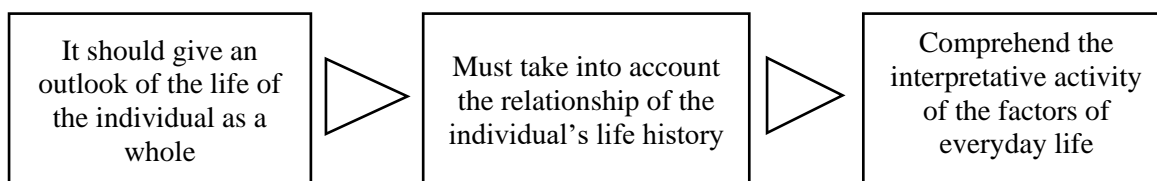


Figure 1. Regulations of biographical research.

Secondly, the specific of the biographical method is that these studies are carried out using qualitative methods. The biographical studies used a combination of methods for the collection of information: interviewing, monitoring, analysis of documents (public and private archives). In general, the collection of information is carried out according a researcher's logical framework, which reflects the main points of the studied biographies. One of the main instruments of the biographical collection of information is a semi-structured and in-depth interview (Bryman, 2012). The interview captures several thematic blocks referring to different directions, or periods of human life (such as childhood, youth, education, work). For each unit there is a list of mandatory questions or issues on which information should be obtained. Other questions can be given for clarification.

The varieties of the biographical method include: oral history, the life story, family history. The history of life and human biography became relevant for the main areas of sociology, such as symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology and others (Figure 2).

Biographical data of sociology - is the main source of detailed description of the history of specific individuals. The most common source of biographical data is personal documents (memoirs, notes, diaries) or material of interviews and conversations. Only in very rare cases, the researcher deals with the biography, including all events of human life. Usually the focus is on the specific aspects or stages of life – career and interpersonal relations. Some authors, instead of referring to widely used terms "biographical method" or "life history", use the term «individual case history» emphasizing a selective

biography (Brian, 2002). This is used for analysis and use of the biographical research method often repelled by the definition of N. Denzin (Denzin, 1989), who believes that the biographical method is the experience of an individual, group or organization in the form in which that person, group or organization interpret these experiences. First of all, it should be noted that in the biographical method, the sociological approach is combined with an anthropological approach.

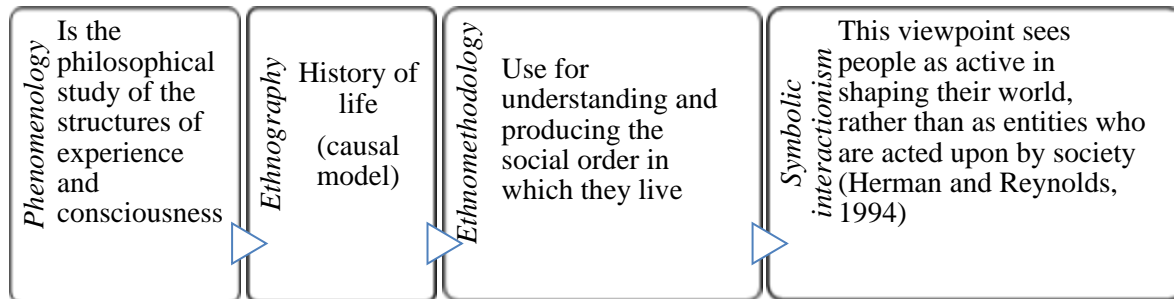


Figure 2. Biographical data for the main areas of sociology.

Biographical method is an important instrument to study the dynamics of social phenomena, norms and values through the prism of individual experiences of individuals or families. Such information is of particular importance in the crucial moments of the life of society, since it is the biography of the individual, which can serve as a typical manifestation of certain social processes. Biographical method is most appropriate where the subject has not yet been sufficiently studied and is not represented in sociological concepts and theories (Solovjov, 1981). After the 1970's, on the wave of renewed interest in the biographical method, its scope has been significantly enhanced.

At the present time it is widely used, where researchers are interested in the subjective experience of social and historical events and processes (wars, revolutions, crises, migration), and certain phases of life: childhood, sickness, and death.

Biographies of people can also be used to reconstruct the history of the formation and development of individual social institutions and organizations (such as political parties and political movements, new directions in science). In modern sociology biographical method is widely used in socio-cultural studies, since it allows to study the personality as the development process, as it allows tracing the dynamics of the way of life of the individual, groups, generations, social communities. This method allows you to explore the subcultures, as well as hard to reach social groups (Buhler, 1971). Classic examples of biographical method in sociology, associated with the description of the behaviour of living people caught in unusual or unique social situation. Quite often, the biographical method is applied in sociology to the study of attitudes of people that have achieved success (the study of the life stories of the great and famous people).

Biographical method has also been used to study a life of a typical / average person. For example, the study of W. Thomas and F. Znaniecki examines the life history of the Polish emigrant Wladek Visnevsky. The biographical method is a tool of knowledge to tackle a variety of social and socio-cultural problems. For example, what is the attitude of a person with a particular biography to a particular social institution or structure? The process of interpretation of people's biographies, produced a study of personality traits which are in demand for the production of new institutions, and the person is regarded as the source of all social and cultural changes. Biographical research provides an opportunity to explore socio-cultural codes, games, communications, relationships and contradictions. People carry the traits of both their personal and family history, the history of the layers of society strata in general, as well as the entire web of values, meanings and contradictions that human beings portray towards each other and the world around them.

If the society influences a person, it is possible to detect traces of that impact in his/her behaviour or lifestyle (Rustin, 2002). Supporters of the biographical method argue that social reality is possible to reconstruct not only on the basis of objective facts, gather statistics, but also biographical and autobiographical data. Sceptics also insist that when a person recalls his/her life events, he/she initially distorts facts for different reasons. Firstly, our memories selectively reproduce the facts and events that have occurred. Secondly, a retrospective view of life cannot rule out the estimated component, which also distorts the facts.

However, these "flaws" can also serve as a social component of the studied events. Thus, we can say that the biographical method is of great value to modern social science, because it allows you to learn complex socio-cultural phenomenon. Until recently, the use of biographical method in sociology has only been used in ethnographic research and as an illustration. However, the problem persists that the study of modern society leads to the need for greater use of the biographical method in anthropological and sociological studies (Drucker, 2011).

To investigate the peculiarities of temporal identity of generations in the historical aspect, the biographical method was used aimed at subjective assessment of self-realization of representatives of various generations in different spheres of life. Biographical method is widely used in empirical research on the temporal arrangement of several authors' life course in the science of psychology (Erzberger, 1998; Prein, Erzberger, 2000). This method, based on investigating a personality's life course in the context of time, makes it possible to study and assess the efficiency of personality's life arrangement in time and to what extent the personality identifies with it. Biographical method allows joining the general life accomplishment with the personality's subjective assessment (Miller, 2000).

The methodological basis of biographical survey is based on life sphere analysis approach (Heinz, 1999; Sackmann, Wingens, 2001) and authors' empirical data assessing the most important life spheres that to a different degree facilitate personality's *self-realization* and that may constitute the operational construct of this essential personality's self-realization course. Usually the assessment entails 5 life spheres concerned with changes in the personality's life course: 1) *education* (satisfaction with one's education level; correspondence between education and professional accomplishment, life plans, labour market and time requirements; self-growth promotion); 2) *professional action* (satisfaction with one's professional accomplishment; career growth; assessment of one's professionalism; qualification improvement; correspondence of professional action with life calling); 3) *society* (participation in social and political life; status in society; expressing one's beliefs and convictions; usefulness for others); 4) *family* (satisfaction with the family status and partner relations; family life; care for the family welfare; recognition of the family lifestyle in society; family value development and preservation); 5) *interests and self-development* (satisfaction with one's self-development level; development of interests, abilities, talents and their recognition in society; sharing experience; correspondence of the development of interests, abilities, and talents with the life calling) (Heinz, 1999; Sackmann, Wingens, 2001). Sometimes another scale of integrative life assessment is differentiated – *general life self-realization* (assessing one's achievement level; correspondence of life plans and goals to their realization; assessing one's contribution to life realization; recognition of one's accomplishments in society; satisfaction with one's life) (Zimbardo, Boyd, 1999).

The world's most powerful people's biographies analysis

If you consider the historical importance and far-reaching influence of these individuals, leadership might seem like a noble but lofty goal. But like all of us, these people started out as students, workers, and citizens who possessed ideas about how some aspect of daily life could be improved on a larger scale (Northouse, 2016). Through diligence and experience, they improved upon their ideas by sharing them with others, seeking their opinions and feedback, and constantly looking for the best way to accomplish goals for a group (Mintzberg, 1973). Thus, we all have the potential to be leaders at work, communities, regardless of age or experience. Leaders are vital at every level of an organization; cultivating leadership skills early is a great way to pave the way for success. Many people have no desire to be leaders; after all, leadership comes with many responsibilities and risks that other members of a team do not have to worry about (Collins, 2001). Thus, some people are more comfortable in the role of contributor. However, in much of today's world, teamwork is essential for completing projects and assignments, and teams without leaders usually are ineffective in achieving their goals.

Leaders inspire others to act by setting good examples. Their drive and perseverance spur others on. Leaders strive to be the best they can be—not to compete with others. In fact, a leader's job is to help others make their best contribution toward a shared goal. Leaders motivate others through mutual trust. The leader must trust in his or her teammates' abilities and willingness to pursue a goal (Daft, 1999).

Studying biographies of successful leaders who lived and worked under extreme conditions may be compared to a behavioural experiment or test in centrifuge: leaders are thrown into an extreme situation and centrifuge separated greatness from mediocrity. We investigate the difference between the great and simply good under the conditions that bring out and emphasize this difference, in order to make it

possible for modern leaders to apply their experience for self-empowerment in society (Daresh, 1995). *An established myth:* successful leaders develop from courageous prophets who are ready to take risks. *Refuting revelation:* the great leaders whose life we have studied did not possess the gift of prediction at all. They were looking for things that worked, investigated why they worked, and constructed their own policy, campaign on the basis that had proved its reliability. These leaders did not stand out from other leaders by inclination to take a risk, daring, foresight, or creativity. However, they were more disciplined; they more relied on their experience and were very particular about securing themselves against failure. *An established myth:* in the world full of danger there survives the one who is faster. Run, otherwise you will lose. *Refuting revelation:* in the world of high speed one needs fast reaction and fast decisions; therefore, all the basic principles are reduced to the call “Faster! Faster! Faster!” Successful leaders knew when they needed to hurry and when there was no need for haste. According to the guru of management, Peter Drucker, the best and possibly the only way of predicting future is creating it (Wyatt, 1990).

Studying biographies of successful leaders reveals how Karlis Ulmanis – Prime Minister of Latvia; Vaira Vike-Freiberga – Sixth President of Latvia; Henry Ford – American industrialist, founder of the Ford Motor Company; Margaret Thatcher – Prime Minister of the United Kingdom; Steve Jobs – American entrepreneur, businessman, inventor, and industrial designer; Coco Chanel – French fashion designer and businesswoman, - led their team to victory while others led their teams to failure and bankruptcy(Figure3).



Figure 3. Studying biographies of successful leaders.

What is the difference between these leaders? Why is it so that, under extreme conditions, somebody gained success and made his/her name famous around the world, while somebody else could not survive? Those leaders acted in the same period of time under similar conditions, they pursued a common goal and therefore neither success nor failure can be accounted for exclusively by the environment: they arrived at different ends because they behaved in a different way.

Behavioural principles and major traits of successful leaders

On the one hand, successful leaders realize that they are dealing with an uncertain environment and cannot control or predict with precision many important events. On the other hand, they do not allow the outcome of their activities to be determined by external, uncontrollable forces or chance; they take full responsibility for their fate (Verespej, 2002). Biographical analysis showed that successful leaders enact this responsibility on the basis of three behavioural principles: fanatical discipline, empirical creativity, and productive paranoia (Figure 4). These principles are backed up by a single driving force – fifth-level ambition.

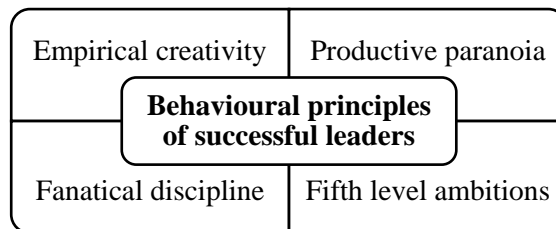


Figure 4. Behavioural principles of successful leaders.

The only kind of discipline these leaders possess is self-discipline, will, and readiness for anything for the sake of a great goal. External events cannot distract them; they do not side-track following the rest of the herd, do not take most tempting chances if they do not comply with their plan. These people are marked by wholeness and steadiness: they do not deviate from their standards and are discipline enough never to overestimate their strength. They were not just disciplined – they were fanatics.

Fanatical discipline. Discipline is basically consistency, devotion to values and long-term goals, compliance to requirements for work, keeping to a certain method. Discipline must not be mistaken for regulation, subordination within a hierarchy, imposing of bureaucratic rules. Genuine discipline means independence of mind that resists pressure and does not agree to what contradicts its values, its requirements for work, and its long-term plans. The only kind of discipline that successful leaders possess is self-discipline, will, and readiness for anything for the sake of a great goal. Karlis Ulmanis, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, Henry Ford, Margaret Thatcher, - successful leaders we have studied are non-conformists in the best meaning of this word. Their values, tasks, long-term goals and strictest requirements for work were set from the very start and they kept to them with fanatical discipline. If for the sake of this goal one needs to sidestep from the generally accepted behaviour – so much the worse for the generally accepted behaviour. Neither external forces nor even social norms could make them turn away from the selected route. In an unreliable and cruel world following a mad crowd is a steady way to destruction (Schlender, 2005). Their independence is rooted not in courage or daring, or inclination to revolt – in this sense our leaders little differ from others. But they more relied on experience that is also necessary for modern leaders.

Empirical creativity. Successful leaders, making their route under uncertain conditions, did not look back to traditional notions and the actions of others. Steve Jobs, Coco Chanel were not concerned even with the opinions of experts. They are completely focused on empirical data. Yet, as opposed to custom and common opinion, the determination of these people was not guided by willingness to prove their independence and demonstrate their stubbornness. Their task was to strengthen their independent judgement by empirical data and direct their creative instinct. Acting empirically means relying on direct observation, making experiments or deal with statistics instead of proceeding from opinions, oddities, traditional views, authorities, and uncertified ideas. Thorough empirical preparation made it possible for them to take daring, creative steps at the same time limiting the risks. Yet, strong leaders in their decisions and actions lean on much more solid empirical foundation that gives them certainty and at the same time excludes unnecessary risk (Collins, Hansen, 2011).

Productive paranoia. The analysis of biographical sources and documents reveals that successful leaders differed and differ from less successful leaders by over-alertness both at good times and bad times. In the most peaceful, predictable, beneficial situations, leaders constantly keep in mind that at any moment conditions may change and turn against them. They are even sure that the conditions will definitely, with absolute probability turn against them at some unpredictable and most inconvenient moment. Therefore, it is better to face a catastrophe in full armament (Brewer, 1994). Productive paranoia is not reduced to trying to avoid danger and searching for a safer and more pleasant route: leaders strive for great goals, whether founding a new company or a noble dream of changing the world, or willingness to serve people. This is their life credo: they strive not only to preserve what they have but also to create and consolidate something genuinely great, bigger than themselves.

Fifth-level ambitions. Then why do people follow them? Biographical analysis answers this question – because their daring ambitions are attractive: Henry Ford, Margaret Thatcher invested their selfishness and fanaticism into something more significant and lasting than themselves. Steve Jobs and Coco Chanel are ambitious, but their ambitiousness is directed not at their own ‘ego’ but at a great goal – founding a company, changing the world, at something beautiful, important, not just themselves. According to research, passing from good to great was each time executed due to the emergence of a fifth-level leader who was focused not on him/herself but on what had to be done; the leader did not stand out among others; they inspired their co-workers by principles and not by personal charisma.

Modern leaders need to make use of prophetic principles and major traits of successful leaders for constructing their conduct during self-development and implementation of their ideas (Watkins, 2001).

Results and Discussion

It is very important for contemporary leaders to take into consideration that using behavioural principles and key traits of successful leaders for constructing their behaviour would not be “cloning” but a best model for self-development and self-accomplishment (Loehlin, Willerman, Horn, 1988).

Studying biographies, behavioural principles, and key traits of successful leaders like Karlis Ulmanis, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, Henry Ford, Margaret Thatcher, Steve Jobs, and Coco Chanel crystallized

directions that help systematize the acquired information and place it into three dimensions (matrix-building exercise). (Table 1; Table 2; Table 3.)

Table 1

Childhood/Parents/Early life and Education (personal experiences, person's objective)

	Parents/Family	Early life/Education
Kārlis Ulmanis	Father Indriķis Ulmanis and mother Lizeta. Was born in a prosperous farming family.	Studied agriculture Zurich/Leipzig University. Studied at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
Vaira Viķe-Freiberga	Parents escaped to Nazi Germany. Father Kārlis Viķis was sailor.	First education in refugee camp/Lubeck. Master of Arts and Psychology.
Henry Ford	Ford was devastated when his mother died. His father expected him to eventually take over the family farm, but he despised farm work.	Left home to work as an apprentice machinist in Detroit. Studied bookkeeping at Goldsmith, Bryant and Stratton Business College in Detroit.
Margaret Thatcher	Her father owned two grocery shops. He won majority on Grantham Council. Father brought up his daughter as a strict western Methodist.	Work as a research chemist. Study chemistry at Somerville College, Oxford.
Steve Jobs	Steve Jobs' biological father, Abdulfattah 'John' Jandali. Jobs' adoptive father- Paul Reinhold Jobs. Father was a student activist and spent time in jail for his political activities.	He knew how to build anything. If we needed a cabinet, he would build it. Deeply involved in electronics (10 years old). Reed college in Portland.
Coco Chanel	Gabrielle Bonheur Chanel was born in 1883 to an unmarried mother. Living a nomadic life, the family resided in rundown lodgings, her mother died of bronchitis.	Was sent to central France, to the convent of Aubazine, which ran an orphanage, stark, frugal life, demanding strict discipline. The tragedy of this, being placed in the orphanage may have been the best thing for Coco's future because it is where she learned to sew.

In producing biographical analysis and studying the correlation of favourable and unfavourable outcomes, one is not to limit oneself to only three dimensions. Other directions may be applied for processing the acquired information inserting the required data in tables (matrix-building exercise), supplementing them in the process of analysis of biographical literature.

Success in unfavourable environment gives rise to confidence. Confidence cannot be infused by speeches, it does not flow from a charismatic personality to employees and it is not heated by noisy meetings, ungrounded optimism and blind devotion (Hackman, 2002).

Studies of biographies of great personalities lead to the conclusion that the very fact of achieving certain results strengthens confidence: having overcome difficulties once, a person becomes sure that s/he will make it next time again – and again, and again (Hart, 2000).

Table 2

A social and cultural environment (personal experiences, person's objective events)

	Social/Cultural environment	Surrounding	Assessment
Kārlis Ulmanis	Was imprisoned in Pskov. Very high standard of living.	6-year rule – a Golden Age of the Latvian nation.	Rapid economic growth.
Vaira Viķe-Freiberga	She is a founding member and current President of the clubs. An honorary patron of the Paris Colloquium on the Teaching of European literatures.	Has received many medals and awards.	As a member of team of global political leaders helping to promote comprehensive reform agenda.
Henry Ford	Labour philosophy. Interest in materials science and engineering.	Arranged for his family to control the company permanently.	Ford was a pioneer of "Welfare capitalism".

	Social/Cultural environment	Surrounding	Assessment
Margaret Thatcher	School reports showed hard work and continual improvement. Her extracurricular activities included the piano, field hockey, poetry recitals, swimming and walking.	She was already thinking towards law and politics, the first Prime Minister with a science degree.	Active climate protection policy.
Steve Jobs	Populated with engineering families, did not want to spend his parents' money.	Simple life.	Pre-Apple, NeXT computer, iPhone iPad.
Coco Chanel	Managed to accumulate when the plate was passed. The horse culture and penchant for hunting	Chanel entry into the highest levels of British aristocracy.	Little black dress Parfum Chanel N5.

Table 3

Tendencies and risks of society's development (personal experiences, person's objective events)

	Tendencies	Effect	Activities
Kārlis Ulmanis	Served as Prime Minister - The Ulmanis regime was unique.	Education was actively used as a tool of assimilation of minorities. Political life was proscribed; Culture/economy was as eventually organized into a type of corporate statism.	Agriculture/manufacturing sectors were micromanaged to an extreme degree.
Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga	Received many thousands of letters yearly from Latvians	Has been actively participating as an invited speaker at a wide variety of international events. She was chair of the European Research Area Board Identification Committee.	Regularly visited towns and villages to meet her constituents in person.
Henry Ford	The five-dollar wage, the five-day workweek.	Preserving Americana. Ford was adamantly against labour unions.	Ford had a global vision.
Margaret Thatcher	She imposed public expenditure cuts on the state education system.	...of free milk for schoolchildren aged seven to eleven. Northern Ireland.	The first former Prime Minister to set up a foundation.
Steve Jobs	He was given a summer job	Apple -one of the first highly successful mass-produced.	Investor, industrial designer.
Coco Chanel	She was among other girls dubbed poseuses, the performers who entertained the crowd between star turns.	Her singing voice was marginal, and she failed to find stage work 70 years old, after having her couture house closed for 15 years, she felt the time was right for her to re-enter the fashion world.	Businesswoman, Fashion designer.

Analysis of biographies of powerful people provided for bringing out factors influencing their formation as personalities that may be used by modern leaders for constructing their identities (Figure 5). This leads to the conclusion that the world's most powerful people's life experiences constitute the basic platform for the leaders' self-development, self-perfection, and self-realization.

Biographical analysis reveals that successful leaders have learned from their errors. They regarded their errors as a lesson, expensive as it may be: once the misfortune has happened, one must put it to some kind of use, learn this lesson and never again repeat errors like that. The analysed documents illustrate an extremely important principle: in the unstable, unreliable, fast changing world one must not rely on pure analysis: theory is of no avail whatsoever. Certainly, analytical skills are still on demand, but empirical proofs are much more important. Modern leaders must take this into consideration when using the results of biographical analysis (Hyman, Sheatsley, 1956).

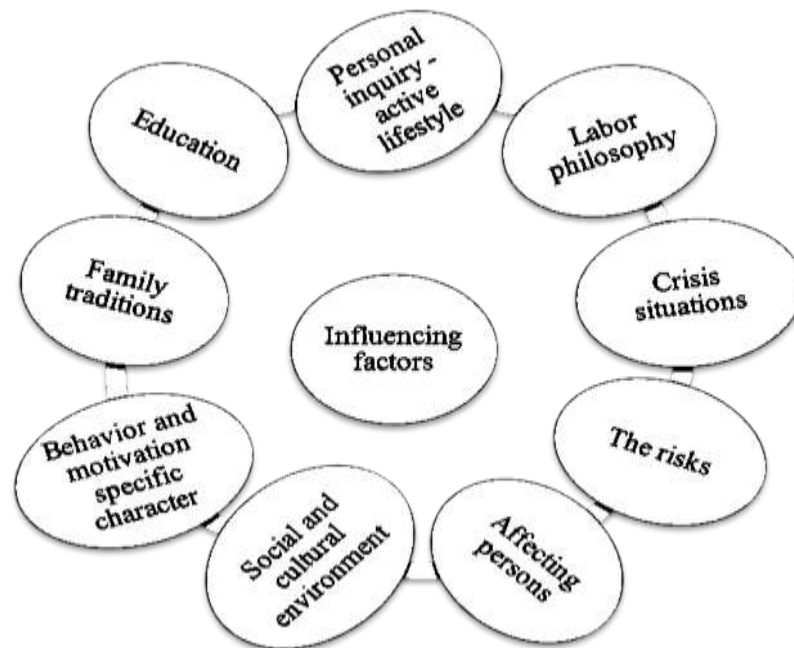


Figure 5. Factors influencing people' formation as personalities.

The basic principle runs: check everything in practice

Having set an intention in the early 2000s to open a chain of Apple retail shops, Steve Jobs admitted at once that he did not know how to do it. Jobs invited Drexler to join the board of directors of his company and started learning hard. Drexler advised Jobs not to start straight away with a huge swing, not to open twenty, forty shops but to develop a project of a shop and adjust it several times until it starts working, and only then spread the network across the world, when everything is tried, and the utility of the project is proved. Jobs followed the advice. The first cycle did not yield the expected results, so Jobs adjusted the conception, tried out in practice and adjusted again until everything was running smoothly.

It is impossible to predict concrete trouble with certainty; therefore, leaders regularly accumulate reserves and prepare shock-absorbers exactly for unpredictable events. For sure, successful leaders do take risks from time to time, yet, as compared to others in similar situations, they more often refrain from risk, control it, and avoid it (Roy, 2015).

According to many contemporary industrial psychologists' expertise, e.g. R. Hogan (Hogan, 1996), five categories of traits are singled out that are especially significant for leader behaviour: being tended towards society, readiness to seek for agreement, responsibility, sensibility and openness to new experience. Summarizing numerous concepts in the investigation of the phenomenon of leadership, one of the major European management experts, M. Kets de Vries (Kets de Vries, 2009) enumerates the major concept trends for contemporary leader self-realization:

- *dynamism* – referring to special people who are goal-oriented, insistent, having their own vision and style and who are tended towards success; they keep acting even when others do not support them;
- *communicability* – successful leaders have highly developed communication skills (complying with the scale of extroversion in all authors' opinion);
- *enterprise* – successful leaders are always open to new ideas and methods of implementation;
- *readiness to reach agreement* – search for agreement is the basis of modern teamwork. Good leaders are usually responsive, they are flexible, therefore recognized team players;
- *reliability* – efficient leaders are responsible and usually finish all they have started;
- *analytical intellect* most of efficient leaders are marked by the analytical intellect higher than average. It helps think strategically, yet, paradoxically as it may be, too high IQ is not advisable because in that case people are tended to rationalize their personal opinion;
- *emotional potential* successful leaders know how to manage their emotions and understand feelings of others, they have a high level of empathy, they can assess their own and other people's strong and weak points, thus justifying their choices of supporting, sustaining and directing relations towards reaching the set goals.

Analysis of biographies of great personalities and studies of the correlation of favourable and unfavourable outcomes to the speed of awareness, speed of making decision and its execution lead to a conclusion that many leaders were ruined by faltering when faced by upcoming risks (Zinn, 2004). "Speed and Outcome" summarizes the results of the above-mentioned analysis. It reveals a much more interesting picture than the primitive rule, "Move faster in any circumstances". We ascertained that it is much more useful to recognize change or threat in advance and use all the time at one's disposal – be it much or little – for making a deliberate and strictly executable decision than make decision after decision in haste. The key question in this respect proved to be, "How much time do we have before the character of the threat or risk we are facing changes?" instead of "Shall we act fast or slowly?"

Conclusions

Analysing biographies of great personalities and studying principles of their behaviour and major traits, modern leaders can apply the method of biographical analysis as a tool for constructing their identity. The experience and skills gained will become a vector for self-growth, self-empowerment, and transformation.

Biographical method is an important instrument to study the dynamics of social phenomena, norms and values through the prism of individual experiences of individuals or families. Modern leaders, when applying the experience of great personalities, ought to take into consideration that sometimes risk may be aggravated by hasty actions, sometimes by faltering. Such information is of particular importance in the crucial moments of the life of society, since it is the biography of the individual, which can serve as a typical manifestation of certain social processes. Biographical method is most appropriate where the subject has not yet been sufficiently studied and is not represented in sociological concepts and theories.

The analysis of biographical sources and documents reveals that successful leaders differed and differ from less successful leaders by over-alertness both at good times and bad times. In the most peaceful, predictable, beneficial situations, leaders constantly keep in mind that at any moment conditions may change and turn against them. They are even sure that the conditions will definitely, with absolute probability turn against them at some unpredictable and most inconvenient moment.

Biographical analysis reveals that successful leaders have learned from their errors. They regarded their errors as a lesson, expensive as it may be: once the misfortune has happened, one must put it to some kind of use, learn this lesson and never again repeat errors like that. The analysed documents illustrate an extremely important principle: in the unstable, unreliable, fast changing world one must not rely on pure analysis: theory is of no avail whatsoever.

A retrospective point of view shows that the basic platform for the leader's self-development, an opportunity of the choice of environment with successful people and creation of strong contacts with them, a possibility to change his/her thinking approach and to create innovative work products on the basis of it. And we prove that the generalization of the world's most powerful people's life experiences is outlined as the tool of challenge for a modern leader's identity construction.

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