HAL
open science

How to Help Emerging Adults Develop their Career and Design Their Lives in an Age of Uncertainty?

Jean Guichard

To cite this version:

Jean Guichard. How to Help Emerging Adults Develop their Career and Design Their Lives in an Age of Uncertainty?. Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences, 2012, 7 (4), pp.298-310. hal-03236561

HAL Id: hal-03236561

https://cnam.hal.science/hal-03236561v1

Submitted on 26 May 2021

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences

Volume 7, Issue 4 (2012) 298-310

http://www.awer-center.org/cjes/

How to Help Emerging Adults Develop their Career and Design Their Lives in an Age of Uncertainty?

Jean Guichard [a] *

[a] University professor in vocational and counseling psychology, Institut National d'Etude du Travail et d'Orientation Professionnelle [National Institute for the Study of Work and Career Counseling], Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers [National Conservatory of Applied Technologies], 41, rue Gay Lussac 75005, Paris - France

Abstract

In the context of liquid modernity, vocational issues are much broader and more difficult than earlier as they imply an ongoing reflection on the meaning of one's own life in the purpose of designing it. Everyone is perceived as owning a certain capital of various competencies on which he/she can rely to cope with such a task. This capital varies greatly from one individual to another, depending on their genders, social or ethnic origins, the school organizations they were educated in, the societies where they live, etc. Three kinds of interventions can be offered to help individuals design and construct their careers and lives – information, guidance, and counseling – which may be differentiated according to the importance of the reflection on themselves they request from clients.

Keywords: Career capital, counseling, emerging adults, guidance, identity capital, life designing, school organization;

Selection and/or peer review under responsibility of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zehra Ozcinar, Assist. Prof. Dr. Çiğdem Hürsen

©2012 Academic World Education & Research Center. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

In our societies, career development is considered as the task of individuals who must wonder what they should do. This view can be summarized in the terminology of Michel Foucault (1986, 1988): Constructing one's life and career means to be concerned with the care and the government of oneself. What are the competencies that individuals need to master to be able to govern their career and themselves? For the purpose of answering this question, this article first stresses two major features that characterize today's western societies: The importance of work in most people's lives and the fact that these societies have passed from a solid phase of modernity to a liquid one. That is to

* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Jean Guichard, INETOP-CNAM, 41, rue Gay Lussac, 75005 Paris, France
E-mail address: jean.guichard@cnam.fr

quote Bauman (2007): "Into a condition in which social forms (…) can no longer (…) keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them" (p. 1).

But not only our societies changed, so too did work organizations in many companies during these last decades. As the second part of this article underlines, in many firms, the notion of trade, occupation and career – in their traditional senses – have been challenged both by a mode of organization of work sometimes identified as "boundaryless" and by a growth in peripheral work. In such a work context, individuals' careers are now seen as depending mainly on a capital of certain competencies that each person is supposed to have constructed.

The factors and processes of these competencies' construction – in late adolescents and young adults – are described in this article's third part. As it will be observed, in wealthy societies, school plays a role in this construction. But according to the way school is organized, it can more or less stir these competencies' construction.

These different developments lead to a serious observation: The capital of competencies a person may rely on to construct his/her career and life may differ considerably - in terms of nature and volume - from the one of another person. Therefore, career counselors have now to find an answer to a tricky question: How to help these quite different people develop their career or identity capital?

2.Constructing One's Life And Career In Contemporary Western Societies

Seen from the angle of career development, all contemporary Western societies share two major characteristics. First, work is regarded as holding a central role in people's lives and, second, these societies appear to provide fewer and fewer individuals with solid frames of reference to help them design their lives.

2.1. The central role of work

Industrialized Western societies are based on a division of labor. But work is now a complex social phenomenon. Modern work involves everyone in sophisticated organizations (where workers fill different roles, accustom themselves to a certain collective history, adjust themselves, and adapt their jobs to themselves). In addition, modern work places everyone in social positions arranged by the particular society.

Considering these characteristics, the activity of working plays a major role in constructing an individual's identity: Individuals transform through their work; they develop specific competencies of varying types (technical skills, knowledge, ways of interaction, etc.). In this way they gather certain experiences, which in turn constitute the foundation on which they are able for themselves to construct self-conceptions such as self-efficacy beliefs, major interests, and value systems.

Correspondingly, in our societies we tend to consider work as offering us a major opportunity to fully achieve oneself. We think, as Schlanger (2010) has shown, that our employment is the (main) occasion for realizing our vocation. Consequently, for Westerners, career development isn't only about taking care of oneself, but above all is an effort to attain self-actualization through working. This is the origin of the English terminology used to describe the activity of constructing one's life and career: "Career development" or "career construction". What is conceived as "finding one's way" in other languages (e.g., s'orienter in French) is primarily interpreted in terms of knowing how to control the development of one's career and education.

2.2. Constructing one's life and career in an uncertain world

Our societal context is also present in our understanding of the activity of developing one's career via the mediation of a set of collective or social representations, or of beliefs connected to social phenomena. Thus, in most wealthy societies, the last three decades have been marked by increased feelings of uncertainty concerning the future. Numerous recent works by sociologists, social psychologists, historians and philosophers emphasize this point. Their titles speak for themselves; for example, "The uncertain individual" (Ehrenberg, 1995) and "Liquid times: Living in an age of uncertainty" (Bauman, 2007).

The emergence of such feelings appears to correspond to a passage from an era when the notion of future plans was central to a new era when "strategic analysis" had become a basic principle. This change is significant, as the online encyclopedia Wikipedia displays in the French article on "Stratégie" (Wikipédia, 2010): "Whereas the idea of a plan follows linear reasoning by focusing on the objective-constraint relation (i.e. following the belief that one will reach one's goal immediately by eliminating all obstacles), strategic thinking is of a complex nature, reversing the given problem: Here, the course is determined by the resources, not by the objectives. Depending on the resources, objectives are determined, or at least adjusted. Reflecting upon these resources considers the value of what exists and how to derive advantage from it. Accordingly, reflection comprises the identification and mobilization of human resources, […] capturing all possibilities and favorable occasions. […] Concerning constraints and obstacles, one tries to modify them, to evade them, or ideally to transform them into resources."

2.3 From career planning to strategic mindset and sense of self

This distinction between planning and strategizing mindsets seems to be essential in describing the tasks of constructing one's life and career in the contemporary context. Indeed, their perspectives differ as regards their anchoring points and their time spans. The starting point of the "planning" attitude is the definition of a future "goal," an ideal to be attained. It can be more or less far away. The means and resources to attain the goal are clear. Differently, the starting point of the "strategic" attitude is current reality. The actual contexts provide possibilities to those who can recognize and use these possibilities. The resources appear almost at the same time as the possibilities. Individuals identify these opportunities at the same time that they become aware of the resources they possess to make opportunities become real.

In this social context of an uncertain future, constructing one's life and career calls for a capability to take advantage of chance events. That's what Mitchell, Levin, and Krumboltz (1999) have called "planned happenstance" (p. 115). Transforming unexpected events into career opportunities implies a strong reactivity, flexibility, and masterful adaptation (Savickas, 1997).

Nevertheless, such a strategic mindset requires that individuals know what matters to them. Indeed, individuals are able to discover what might become an opportunity only if they have already thought about (or immediately begin to think about) what is import to them. Recognizing a potential opportunity implies that the possibility is meaningful to the person. Using the term coined by Gibson (1979, pp. 127-128), we can say that an opportunity is an "affordance" as it is perceived in a certain way by the person because she/he immediately anticipates its usefulness.

A strategic behavior is only possible if the person has a "sense of self". To develop such a sense, "individualized" individuals in our societies must engage in reflection about themselves, their activities

and interactions, their expectations, and the world in which they live. This reflection corresponds to the never-ending work of personalisation (Malrieu, 2003). Indeed, our societies no longer provide many social and organizational frames with which to – for example – organize everyday life by structuring time and space and understand specific roles for men and women. The function of support, or holding in the sense of Winnicott (1986), provided by the great social institutions (religions, ideologies, parties, guilds, syndicates, etc.) is fading. And, as discussed by Taylor (1989), individuals don't have any other alternative than to determine by themselves what life means to them. They must identify for themselves their fundamental values or "key-goods" that serve this holding function and allow them to construct their lives and careers. People now have to get their life's bearings, and to get them not only once and for all, but repeatedly.

In summary, it can be said that constructing one's life and career, for the individuals in industrialized Western societies, means to take up an actual opportunity, and even to create such opportunities in the different contexts wherein they interact. They must do so to achieve aims that seem of fundamental importance to them. Alternatively, they may redefine their own fundamental aims. The definition and redefinition of major aims requires a reflective activity that is essential to life and career construction.

3.Work Organization And Life And Career Construction

If the activity of constructing one's life and career has become so complex, it is first because our societies decreasingly offer institutions that provide the holding function. But, it is also because work organizations have dramatically changed. Companies of the 1950s to 1970s offered the possibility of career development (Super, 1980). The employment contract included a psychological dimension by which, in return for a loyalty to the company's success, it provided employees with regular employment and opportunities for promotion along relatively well-defined professional pathways (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996).

3.1 Flexible work and protean careers

Today, the notion of trade, occupation and professional pathways are challenged by a mode of organization of work identified as "boundaryless" (Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick & Kerr, 1995). In such organizations, certain employees – generally called collaborators – are gathered for the time required to achieve a mission that they have agreed to perform. In each new mission, they have to prove anew their competencies. Nothing is ever assured. A qualification is never permanently recognized. It is only seen as a set of competencies displayed in a specific setting.

In this mode of organization of work, companies do not guarantee any future commitment to their collaborators. In turn, collaborators are not expected to remain loyal to the company. Furthermore, a growing number of them don't think they have to be: Careers become "boundaryless" (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) or "protean" (Hall, 1976, p. 201). They are considered to depend exclusively on the individuals, on their strategies, and their own career and life management abilities.

In such work settings, constructing one's career means first to take stock of one's competencies, that is to say to be able to adopt a certain reflexive standpoint on one's activities. It means then to know how to spot the actual opportunities in a certain work setting: An opportunity spotting that is made possible only in relation to an analysis of one's own situation and, notably, of one's

competencies. It means, in the end, to be capable of wisely investing one's competencies in this or that mission.

The capacity to relate – by a reflection of a certain type – to their different experiences appears of major importance to the employees in a boundaryless organization, who are under a continuous obligation to construct their careers and lives. They must analyze their activities from a standpoint that allows them to identify their competencies. In addition, they must consider the competencies beyond their specific context and envision their more general use. But above all, they must make sense of general competencies in relation to their priorities in life.

3.2 Flexible employment and vocational and personal chaos

If work has become very flexible for a number of workers, so has employment for a growing number of employees (and auto-entrepreneurs). The just-in-time methods of production imply that companies employ peripheral workers who are hired for a fixed-term contract, rapidly trained in simple tasks, and laid-off when the tasks are completed or the economy worsens. Transitions from being a peripheral worker to becoming a central worker aren't frequent. Those whose employment is uncertain (frequently immigrants, women, young adults, and particularly, children of immigrants) often go from one precarious employment to another, to periods of redundancy and to diverse training schemes: They tend to stay within the secondary segment of the labor market (Reich, Gordon & Edwards, 1973). Their occupational pathways don't form a career, but are rather a "vocational chaos", to quote Riverin-Simard's terms (1996, p. 467).

In addition, job uncertainty is statistically related to uncertainty in all life domains. People whose employment is precarious have to face more numerous psychosocial transitions (Parkes, 1967) than those who have a more stable career: Divorces, relocations, health problems, etc., are notably more frequent in uncertain employees. For them, life and career construction means mainly to be able to cope with multiple and repeated transitions.

Should it be underlined that this task of constructing one's career and life is much more difficult, complex – and sometimes even unachievable – for those whose employment is precarious? Indeed, on the one hand, they have to face more complex issues more often than the others would. On the other hand, they often lack many kinds of resources (e.g., social networks, economic capital, general and technical knowledge, etc.) that could help them.

In summary, it seems clear that life and career construction issues are not exactly the same for peripheral or uncertain employees and for core ones. Moreover, among core employees, this issue differs according to the kind of organization in which they work: Either a bureaucratic organization or a much more flexible one as regards both work and employment. Anyway, beyond these differences, this activity of constructing one's career and life is seen as a task for which everyone is personally responsible.

3.3 Career and identity capital

To cope with this societal demand to construct one's life and career, for which everyone is considered to be personally responsible, individuals of liquid societies are seen as having to rely on different competencies. These have been conceptualized in terms of career competencies, or career capital (for adults) and identity capital (for adolescents and young adults).

Career competencies or career capital (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) are differentiated into three categories. The first category - knowing how - relates to knowledge, know-how, skills, expertise, attitudes, etc., that allow a person to carry out any activity he/she is able to do. The second one – knowing whom – designates the social network on which an individual can count. The third one – knowing why – refers to the meaning that people make of their various endeavors in different life domains, in relation to their major expectations concerning existence.

To describe the factors permitting people – notably adolescents and emerging adults – to construct their lives and careers, Côté (1996) has proposed the concept of "identity capital". He defines it as follows: "The term 'identity capital' denotes what individuals 'invest' in 'who they are'. These investments potentially reap future dividends in the "identity markets" of late-modern communities (…). The most successful investors in the identity markets presumably have portfolios comprising two types of assets, one more sociological and the other more psychological" (Côté, 1996, pp. 425-26). These sociological features comprise, notably, educational credentials, fraternity/sorority and club/association memberships, and personal deportment (e.g., manner of dress, physical attractiveness, and speech patterns). The more psychological elements consist of negotiable self-concepts and self-presentations, exploration of commitments, ego strength, self-efficacy, cognitive flexibility and complexity, self-monitoring, critical thinking abilities, moral reasoning abilities, and other attributes that can give individuals abilities to "understand and negotiate the various social, occupational and personal obstacles and opportunities they are likely to encounter throughout late-modern life" (Côté, 1996, p. 426).

To deal with the actual career and life issues they face, individuals rely also on certain specific competencies. These are, notably, (a) certain feelings of self-determination in such a situation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), (b) different self-efficacy beliefs (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994), (c) some abilities to decide both thoroughly and rapidly (Gati, 1986), (d) a certain capability to spot certain opportunities and seize them (Mitchell et al., 1999), adaptability (Savickas, 1997), and (e) a power to integrate their career moves in a life story that makes sense to them, that is to say to "biographize" themselves (Delory-Momberger, 2004, p. 558; see also: Malrieu, 2003; Guichard, 2004, 2005; Savickas, 2011).

These specific competencies (which play a major role in the actual processes of career and life construction) may be considered as the outcomes of the interactions (of the multiple interrelations) between the three grand categories of career competencies distinguished above. For example, the formation of certain self-efficacy beliefs first of all depends on the knowledge, know-how and skills a person progressively has learned to master. It secondly depends on the valorization of this kind of knowledge, know-how or skills in the different circles forming the social world of this person, and also on that these talents bring him/her recognition in these circles (that is to say that they are attributed to him/her). But the formation of these same self-efficacy beliefs depends thirdly on the recognition by this person him/herself (a) of his/her mastering of these competencies that are attributed to him/her, and (b) besides, that these competencies are important components of certain aspects of his/her identity, aspects that are today of major importance in relation to his/her (general or current) life expectations.

4.The Development Of Career And Life Construction Competencies

4.1Context and interlocutions in competency construction

The observation of these career and life construction competencies (career competencies, identity capital and correlative "specific" career competencies) raises the issue of how they are constructed. Research has shown that the activities, interactions and interlocutions which individuals carry out in their different life settings play a determining role in this construction (for a synthesis, see Guichard & Huteau, 2006).

In each of the settings (family, occupational, academic, sports, community, etc.) in which the individual interacts: (a) certain social representations prevail (for example, about the social roles of men and women, or about what it means "to achieve something in life"); (b) certain values are in current use; (c) certain role models (real known persons or media figures) are admired; (d) certain types of activities are required, encouraged, discouraged, prohibited, etc., in such or such a person, depending on their position, age and gender; (e) certain interlocutions are common practice (for example, one speaks or not of such or such issue and one speaks of it in this way); (f) certain retroactions occur (for example, one is or is not recognized for doing such or such activity and encouraged to do it, and at the same time discouraged or even persuaded not to do another); and (g) certain positioning is more or less strictly attributed to the different actors.

Individuals' involvement in such setting of interactions and dialogues depends closely on the volume of the different types of capital (economic, cultural and social; cf., Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) that they obtain (or that their family possesses in the case of teenagers or emerging adults) and on their gender. However, the experiences that individuals can have in some settings lead them to construct certain competencies that have a social bigger utility or value - as regards their life and career construction - than the experiences they can have in other settings. Furthermore, individuals can interact and dialogue in a more or less important number of settings (in general, the better a person is endowed with the different types of capital, the greater the number of settings he/she participates in). These different settings may be more or less dissonant or consonant. The more dissonant they are, the more the individuals have to get involved in mesosystemic transitions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), that is to say in repeated switching back and forth from one setting to the other that leads them to develop a great flexibility in the way they are, act, interact, and relate to themselves.

All of these factors combine to produce the same result: The capital of competencies a person may rely on to construct his/her career and life may considerably differ - in terms of nature and volume - from one person to another. Individual agencies in this matter differ considerably and appear to be closely bound to individual social positioning. Therefore, one has to subscribe to the analysis of Grosjean and Sarnin (2002, p. 16): "The almost exclusive attribution to individuals of their career management (...) may appear as progress to those who have latitude of choice in their system of activities, and as a social regression, combining with a psychological ordeal, for workers in precarious positions, since they are put in the paradoxical situation of having to consider that their career depends on them whereas what they live is a course of events over which they have no/little control. (...) It is the same for blue collars when talks about individual career management run counter to any possible projection into a future career".

4.2 The formation of career and life construction competencies in adolescence and emerging adulthood

In our societies, adolescence and emerging adulthood (20-25 years) are fundamental time periods when career and life construction competencies develop. Indeed, as Havighurst (1952) and Arnett

(2000) have shown, youth then accumulate varied experiences, which may be seen as trials permitting them to develop the knowledge, know-how, and knowing-why that are now required to construct one's career and life.

Through the various activities, dialogues, exchanges, retroactions, etc., youth perform in the different settings in which they interact (family, love affair, tentative coupledom, school and trainings, sports, leisure, job, religious, community or political practical experiences, etc.), they construct various degrees of : (a) Specific skills related to the activities they may or not be involved in, (b) modes of relating to themselves and their various experiences that lead them (or not) to perceive themselves as having such interests, qualities or competencies, as able or not to self-determine in this or that life domain, etc., (c) some views of roles that may suit them or, on the contrary, they reject, and (d) identifications with (or rejections of) certain public figures or images of professionals.

To some extent, these various experiences depend on what might be called "grand patterns of youth socialization" that differ from one society to another, as it was shown by Van de Velde (2008). She compared the representations, socialization standards, and expected behaviours of emerging adults in four European countries. The two northern countries (Denmark and the United Kingdom) had a normative model of socialization that encourages youth to leave the family and live an autonomous life at a quite young age, around 21 years old, in common. In the two southern countries (Spain and France), a stronger relationship to the family remained for a longer time.

In each of these two groups, both countries aren't comparable. In Denmark, young adults are expected to "find themselves" via a long period of experimentation (a time of personal development involving studies, employment, training, abroad journeys, etc.). This experimentation is made possible by a welfare state, which offers all youth a direct allowance that provides them with economic independence. Furthermore, higher education offers very flexible educational pathways. In the United Kingdom such an allowance doesn't exist. The social standard is "to become rapidly self-sufficient" - that means to become an adult as fast as possible. The time of tertiary education is short. The transition to work occurs quickly. Marriage and parenthood come early. The differences are also notable between Spain and France. In Spain, youth tend to cohabit with their parents until an advanced age. They build up their individuality within their family. The familial affiliation plays a major role in self-definition: The social standard is "to install" oneself in a family life. In France, the stake is different: Youth is considered as a period in life when a major education investment has to be made as it should determine precisely – and for the entire life – the individual's social status. Youth have "to take up a position" and, as a consequence, they have to get their choice of an academic or training curriculum right, as educational pathways are linear and don't allow any mistake.

4.3 Youths' school experience and development of career and life construction competencies

As we have seen, important differences between European countries may be observed in the way the school experience of youth combine with their experiences in other life domains. Nevertheless, in all of these countries, school plays a major role in their socialization, education and training. It contributes to the formation of their career and life construction competencies both explicitly and implicitly. Its explicit contribution occurs via career education interventions (Cf., Hoyt, Evans, Mackin, & Magnum, 1972). But, more important, is its implicit contribution, which is brought about by the architecture of the school organization and the processes of selection and distribution of students.

Because of differences in their educational, social, economic and political traditions (as a more or less centralized state, a more or less importance attached to religions' involvement in education, differences in labour and employer unions' power over and interest in education, etc.), school organizations and processes to select and distribute students differ deeply among countries that are similar from an economic, social and political point of view. In some of them, for example in France, vocational and technical training is part of the organization. In others, like in Germany, it depends on the enterprises. Certain school organizations, as the German one, distribute their children to different academic establishments and curricula early on, for example, when they are about 10-11 years old.. Other countries, like France, distribute their students to different courses of study when they are 15 or 16 years old. Some others, like Finland, extend elementary school up until entrance to secondary school, when students are about 16 years of age, and then offer them a range of modules among which they have to choose according to certain rules. Furthermore, the processes to select and distribute students vary from one country to another. These processes can be unified at a national level (like in France) or vary in relation to the different institutional powers upon which schools depend. They can even vary in recruiting policies specific to each school.

The architecture of the school organization and the actual processes to select and distribute students play a major role in the ways students learn to conceive their future and to face the problem of their life and career construction (Guichard, 1993). For example, French school organization endows teachers with an important power as regards the further courses of studies their students may enter. Numerous studies have shown that such processes of selecting and distributing students, lead students to think about their future, in reference to their previous results at school. They ask themselves: In which subjects do I excel? What are my chances of success in such or such further course of study in relation to my current academic qualities? This way to wonder about one's future was named by Dumora (1990, p. 118) as "surmising reflection" (réflexion probabiliste). It is a way to consider one's future strictly in terms of the curricula that are within one's reach. Dumora has shown that the French students progressively construct this form of future planning, between the age of 11 and 16, in relation to the kind of experience they have during junior high-school.

In comparison, certain kinds of school organizations, like the Finnish one, plant the question of choosing a subject or a curriculum in an extracurricular future. That was observed by Motola (2001) in his thesis that compared French and Finnish senior high-school students. After entering high-school (when they are about 16 years of age) the Finnish students have to combine modules "à la carte" to construct their educational pathways. Hence, they are confronted with questions about their academic career development, similar to the problems of career development they will face in their adult lives. They have to examine their present situation from the future perspectives that such or such modules' combination might open to them. They are led to wonder: What sense does it make to choose this module and to combine it with that one? What consideration can guide me in my decision? To which kind of future perspective may I relate this choice?

Each school organization – in relation to its own processes to select and distribute students – can be seen as a general frame of experience in which youth progressively learn how to wonder about the future. The way Finnish high-school students consider it may be summarized by the following question: "Whom do I want to become?" The question of the French students would rather be: "What do my past and present academic results let me expect as regards my future?" Likely, the Finnish way is more in line, than the French one, with what the advanced modern societies require from the individuals who want to construct their lives and careers.

5 Conclusion: Helping Young People Build Their Career Construction Competencies And Design Their Lives

Four major conclusions can be drawn from the previous observations. First, in today's western societies, people are more than ever considered as personally responsible for their work pathways. Second, in the context of liquid modernity, vocational or career issues are much broader and more difficult than in the past as they imply an ongoing reflection on the meaning of one's own life in the purpose of designing it. Third, everyone is perceived as owning a certain capital of various competencies on which he/she can rely to construct his/her career and design his/her life. Fourth, the construction of these diverse competencies depends on the various experiences an individual can make, notably in adolescence or in emerging adulthood. Therefore, this capital varies greatly from an individual to another, depending on their genders, social or ethnic origins, the school organizations they were educated in, and the societies where they live, etc.

This great inequality between people is certainly one of the reasons why in these same societies it is deemed appropriate to help everyone carry out the complex task of designing and constructing their career and life. To do so, three major kinds of interventions may be distinguished. They may be ordered according to the intensity and the kind of reflection they require from clients.

Informing and teaching how to find relevant information are interventions that aim to help people construct a clearer idea of today's jobs and related curricula and training. Their major purpose is to help them answer questions such as: What major activities does one do in this job? How is work organized? What are the employment prospects in this professional domain? What are the requirements to do such a job? Are there some specific curricula or training programs that prepare one for such a job? Information about the recruiting procedures (résumé, letter of application, etc.) is part of this class, which also includes programs to teach how to find accurate and relevant information on the world wide web. As these interventions are mainly educational, they don't ask clients to reflect on themselves and their experiences, although they predispose them to do so. They indeed stir up a questioning about themselves in relation to the information they have received about the world of work.

Guidance or advisory interventions require that clients engage in a certain type of reflection on themselves and their diverse experiences. Their goal is to help clients create or develop specific ways to relate to themselves and their experiences in the purpose of constructing a vocational self concept that matches the current social norms of employability. This means an adaptable self-concept made of the diverse types of career competencies that form a part of an encompassing identity capital. The core objective of these interventions is the competencies that are required to perform such or such work functions, the way that people doing them have developed these competencies, the competencies that clients involved in such interventions have already constructed, the way they have developed these competencies (through, for example, experiences gained in school, training, leisure, sport, jobs, family, etc.), the competencies that clients may now need to construct, and how this could be done. These interventions thus aim to develop a specified reflexivity, as a means to construct a vocational self-concept according to some norms; such reflexivity is guided by these norms. The "bilan de compétences" (Bernaud, Cohen-Scali, & Guichard, 2007; Lemoine, 2009) or portfolios of competencies (Aubret, 2001) and some career education workshops (Guichard, & Dosnon, 2000) are prototypical examples of this kind of intervention.

As already stressed, in current liquid societies, individuals must think about their lives in order to define (and redefine at each period of their lives) the major expectations that give their lives meaning

(expectations and meaning that permit them, in addition, to adopt the strategic mindset they need to manage their job pathways). Counselling interventions concentrate on this point: Their purpose is to assist people in developing the reflexivity they need to design their lives. Differently from guidance interventions, they don't aim to aid clients in thinking about their lives from the perspective of the current social norms of employability. Their purpose is more fundamental: It is to help them define their own norms, norms from which they can give meaning to their lives and design them. This means: to assist each of them in finding the life bearings that will play the holding role that, in solid societies, relatively steady social and ideological frameworks and routines used to provide individuals with.

A person's reflection on the perspectives which give his/her life meaning implies that he/she engages in dialogues with others or with him-/herself. Therefore, interventions that aim to assist clients in developing such reflexivity take the shape of counselling interlocutions. They are deliberation processes (Lhotellier, 2001) aiming to help clients see from various potential future perspectives their various experiences and give them a (never fully established) meaning. Adolescents and emerging adults are particularly concerned by the development of such reflexivity. But not only them…

Such counseling interventions demand an important reflection from clients. They also require the involvement of a qualified counselor. Therefore, they are more expensive than other kinds of interventions. Nevertheless, their visible costs are few in comparison to the social, human and political costs of high unemployment and the danger of people finding their life bearings through a commitment to ideals based on the rejection of groups of people because of their skin color, religion, culture, or sexual orientation.

References

Arnett, J.J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55, 469-480.

Arthur, M.B., & Rousseau, D.M. (Eds.). (1996). *The boundaryless careers: A new employment principle for a new organizational era*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Ashkenas, R.N., Ulrich, D., Jick, T., & Kerr, S. (1995). *The boundaryless organization: Breaking the chains of organizational structure*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Aubret, J., (2001). *Le portefeuille de compétences. Le portefeuille de compétence des acquis de formation et d'expériences* [Competencies portfolio : A portfolio of experiential, education and training knowledge]. Paris : Editions Qui Plus Est.

Bauman, Z. (2007). *Liquid times: Living in an age of uncertainty*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Bernaud, J.L., Cohen-Scali, V., & Guichard, J. (2007). Counseling psychology in France: A paradoxical situation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 56, 131–151.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Côté, J. (1996). Sociological perspectives on identity formation: The culture-identity link and identity capital. *Journal of Adolescence*, 19, 417-428.

Delory-Momberger, C. (2004). Biographie, socialisation, formation. Comment les individus deviennent-ils des individus? [Biography, socialization, education. How do individuals become individuals?]. L'Orientation *Scolaire et Professionnelle*, 33, 551-570.

Dumora, B. (1990). La dynamique vocationnelle chez l'adolescent de collège: Continuité et ruptures. [Vocational dynamism in junior high-school students: Continuity and ruptures]. *L'Orientation Scolaire et Professionnelle*, 19, 111-127.

Ehrenberg, A. (1995). *L'individu incertain*. [The uncertain individual]. Paris: Hachette Littératures.

Foucault, M. (1986). *The care of the self. The history of sexuality* (Vol. 3). New York, NY: Random House Inc.

Foucault, M. (1988). *Technologies of the self*. In P. H Hutton, H. Gutman, & L. H. Martin (Eds.), Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault (pp. 16-49). Anherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press.

Gati, I. (1986). Making career decisions – A sequential elimination approach. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 33, 408-417.

Gibson, J.J. (1979*). The ecological approach to visual perception*. Boston, MA^: Houghton-Mifflin.

Grosjean, M., & Sarnin. P. (2002). Les *parcours professionnels*. [Job pathways]. Education permanente, 150(1), 9-22.

Guichard, J. (1993). *L'école et les représentations d'avenir des adolescents*. [School experience and future representations in adolescents]. Paris, France: PUF.

Guichard, J. (2004). Se faire soi. [Making oneself self]. *L'Orientation Scolaire et Professionnelle*, 33, 499-534.

Guichard, J. (2005). Life-long self-construction. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 5, 111-124.

Guichard, J., & Dosnon, O. (2000). Cognitive and social relevance of psycho-pedagogical methods in guidance. *Journal of Career Development*, 26, 161-173.

Guichard, J., & Huteau, M. (2006). *Psychologie de l'orientation* (2nd ed.) [Psychology of career development and counselling]. Paris, France: Dunod.

Hall, D.T. (1976). *Careers in organizations*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.

Havighurst, R. (1952). *Developmental tasks and education* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: David McKay.

Hoyt, K.B., Evans, R., Mackin, E., & Magnum, G.L. (1972). *Career education: What is it and how to do it?.* Salt Lake City, UT: Olympus Publishing Company.

Lemoine, C. (2009). *Se former au bilan de compétences. Comprendre et pratiquer cette démarche* (3rd ed.) [Training for competencies elicitation interventions: Understanding and implementing such approach]. Paris: Dunod.

Lent, R.W., Brown, S.D., & Hackett, G. (1994). Toward a unifying social cognitive theory of career and academic interest, choice and performance. *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 45, 79 122.

Lhotellier, A. (2001). *Tenir conseil: délibérer pour agir*. [Counseling: A deliberation for action]. Paris, France: Seli Arslan.

Malrieu, P. (2003). *La construction du sens dans les dires autobiographiques*. [The construction of meaning in the autobiographical narratives]. Toulouse: Erès.

Mitchell, K.E., Levin, A.S., & Krumboltz, J.D. (1999). Planned happenstance: constructing unexpected career opportunities. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 77, 115-124.

Motola, M. (2001). *Social habitus and the impact of socio-cultural factors on vocational behavior of adolescents. A cross-national comparison of French and Finnish students* (Vol. 2). Joensuu, Finland: University Publications in Social Sciences.

Parkes, C.M. (1967). Psycho-social transitions: A field for study. *Social Sciences and Medicine*, 5, 101-115.

Reich, M., Gordon, D.M., & Edwards, R.C. (1973). Dual labor markets: A theory of labor market segmentation. *American Economic Review*, 63, 359-365.

Riverin-Simard, D. (1996). Le concept de chaos vocationnel: Un pas théorique à l'aube du 21ème siècle? ["The concept of vocational chaos: A theoretical advance at the dawn of the 21st century?"]. *L'Orientation Scolaire et Professionnelle,* 25, 467-487.

Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68-78.

Savickas, M.L. (1997). Career adaptability: An integrative construct for life-span, life-space theory. *Career Development Quarterly*, 45, 247-259.

Savickas, M.L. (2011). *Career Counseling*. Washington, DC: APA.

Savickas, M.L., Nota, L., Rossier, J., Dauwalder, J.P., Duarte, M.E., Guichard, J., ... van Vianen, A.E.M. (2009). Life designing: A paradigm for career construction in the 21st century. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 75, 239–250.

Schlanger, J. (2010). *La vocation*. [Vocation]. (2ème ed. augmentée). Paris, France: Hermann.

Super, D.E. (1980). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 13, 282-298.

Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Van de Velde, C. (2008). *Devenir adulte: Sociologie comparée de la jeunesse en Europe*. [Becoming adult: Compared sociology of youth in Europe]. Paris, France: PUF.

Winnicott, D.W. (1986). *Holding and interpretation*. London, UK: Hogarth Press.

Wikipédia (2010). Article Stratégie in Wikipédia in French. Retrieved from http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stratégie.