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► To cite this version:

Jean Guichard. What competencies do people living in liquid societies need in order to design their lives and direct their careers?. Annamaria Di Fabio, Jacobus Gideon Maree (eds.). Psychology of Career Counseling: New challenges for a new era, Nova Press, pp.41-60, 2013, 978-1-62808-272-2. hal-03236901

HAL Id: hal-03236901

<https://cnam.hal.science/hal-03236901>

Submitted on 26 May 2021

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WHAT COMPETENCIES DO PEOPLE LIVING IN LIQUID SOCIETIES NEED IN ORDER TO DESIGN THEIR LIVES AND DIRECT THEIR CAREERS?¹

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ABSTRACT

In liquid modernity, the social forms (institutions, patterns of acceptable behaviors, shared assumptions, etc.) that help people find their lives' bearings fade away and people need to engage in an ongoing process of reflexion to give their lives meaning. In the meantime, the development of new forms of work organisation – and of flexible jobs – implies they construct both an adaptable occupational self-concept and a strategic mindset so as to direct their “protean” career. To do so, they rely on a set of various competencies they have constructed (and still construct) on the occasion of their various experiences. To this same purpose, they may also be offered three kinds of support: information about the world of work, career guidance and counselling for life designing. Career guidance intends to learn people relate to themselves and their various experiences according to the current norms of employability. Counselling dialogues help them to define the major perspectives that give their lives meaning. The constructivist dialogue for life designing is an example of such a counselling approach. It is based on a synthesis of current research (in the various domains of humans and social sciences) about self's construction. This synthesis puts forward three major concepts: identity as a dynamic system of subjective identity forms, dual and ternary reflexivity. Studies of such counselling dialogues show how these two kinds of reflexivity combines in different ways to permit clients design some meaningful life perspectives. One can nevertheless wonder whether this current view of career and life issues that concentrates individuals on their self's constructions is sufficient to make our globalized humanity solve the many crises that it endures.

¹ To quote this chapter: Guichard, J. (2013). What competencies do people living in liquid societies need in order to design their lives and direct their careers? In A. M., Di Fabio, & K. Maree (eds.) (2013) *Psychology of Career Counseling: New challenges for a new era* (pp 41-60). New York: Nova Press.

INTRODUCTION

The kind of career development problems and life designing issues that people face depends mainly on the types of societies they belong to and on the forms of work organizations that prevail within these societies. Our contemporary western societies have been qualified as both individual and liquid societies. In these societies, as the first part of this chapter shows, people are considered as individually responsible for directing their career and governing their lives. This implies they rely on some adequate competencies. What are these competencies? How do they develop? This chapter's second part intends to answer these two questions.

If in liquid modernity people have to govern their lives, it is also considered they can be helped construct the competencies they need for that purpose. As shown in this chapter's third part they can be offered three major kinds of supports. One of them – counselling dialogues for life designing – appears as dealing with some major issues people face in such societies. To implement such interventions, counsellors must rely on knowledge of the processes and factors of self's construction: this chapter's last part outlines a form of counselling interview based on a synthesis of such current knowledge.

These observations lead to a question the conclusion tackles: Although consonant with the liquid modernity features, is this current view of career and life issues – that concentrates individuals on their self's constructions – sufficient to make our globalized humanity solve the many crises it endures and should endure in a near future?

1. CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS AND LIFE DESIGNING ISSUES IN LIQUID MODERNITY

People living in collectivist (Hofstede, 1991) or holist (Dumont, 1985) societies are not required to deal with the same vocational issues as people living in 'societies of individuals' (Elias, 1991). In the former societies it is the collective that thinks about which of its members should contribute to the common good in a particular way. Differently, current western societies are societies of individuals: In these societies, everyone is considered to be personally responsible for the government of self (Foucault, 2010).

Moreover these societies are "liquid" ones (Bauman, 2000). This means they were characterized, during these last decades, by a "passage from the 'solid' to a 'liquid' phase of modernity: that is, into a condition in which social forms (structures that limit individual choices, institutions that guard repetitions of routines, patterns of acceptable behaviour) can no longer (and are not expected) to keep their shape for long, because they decompose and melt faster than the time it takes to cast them, and once they are cast for them to set" (Bauman, 2007, p. 1). Bauman noted that these social forms are not to be given enough time to solidify. Therefore, they cannot serve as frames of reference for human actions and long-term life strategies. Indeed these forms' life expectations are "shorter than the time it takes to develop a cohesive and consistent strategy, and still shorter than the fulfilment of an individual life project' requires" (Bauman, 2007, p. 1).

Thus, liquid societies no longer provide various 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 major social institutions (religions, ideologies, parties, guilds, syndicates, etc.) faded. And, as authors like Taylor (1989) and Parker (2007) have discussed, 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: they have to engage in an ongoing process of designing their lives.

Within western societies, the organization of work was also deeply transformed during the 20th century. When Parsons wrote "Choosing a vocation" (published in 1909, the year that followed his death) the prevailing type of work organization was the "professional system of work" (Touraine, 1955). This means an organization where workers were supposed to have a stable occupational identity made of specific knowledge, know-how, knacks, etc., an identity also made of shared values, social representations, beliefs, etc., corresponding to their particular trade or profession (Dubar, 1998). In relation with such a work organization, vocational guidance (and then career education) was conceived in reference to a grand founding model that concentrated on the idea of an essential relationship between occupations, professions or careers and individual personalities, both of them being considered as (relatively) stable.

Today, most people work in organizations where both employment and work itself are flexible. In these organizations (Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick & Kerr, 1995), often workers form collectives gathered only for the duration of an assignment. In such collectives, each participant's activity depends altogether on the goal to be achieved, on the technical characteristics of the setting and on the abilities of each single member of the collective. In such settings, jobs are more functions in networks than well circumscribed occupations or professions. In such a context, a career is less and less seen as a series of more and more qualified jobs within a same company or in a specific professional field. It is now seen as "protean" (Hall, 1976) or "boundaryless" (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996): two concepts that refer to the idea that an (occupational) career consisted mainly in the meaning an individual makes about the series of his/her various working experiences.

In such uncertain contexts, people are not supposed to form future plans as regards their career as it was the case in more stable organizations. Differently, they have to develop a strategic mindset: i.e. an ability to spot potential work activities (opportunities) that might become theirs in the environment. This is quite a big change as these two perspectives differ as regards their anchoring points and their time spans. The starting point of a planning attitude is the definition of a future goal: a more or less far away ideal to be attained. The means and resources are then defined in relation to this goal. Differently, the starting point of a "strategic" attitude is current reality. In a given context, a certain individual anticipate such or such opportunity at the same time he/she identifies the resources he/she might rely on to make this possibility become real.

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 important to them. Recognizing a potential opportunity implies that the possibility is meaningful to the person. Using the terminology of Gibson (1979), it can be said that an opportunity is an *affordance*: something

that is perceived – and perceived this way – by a person because she/he immediately anticipates from this phenomenon such possibility, which matters to him/her.

These transformations led to a redefinition of the career interventions (education or counselling), linked to a change in their core reference point, which appeared to be less and less the relationship between individuals and occupations or careers (as they are or might become). Differently, career interventions need now to concentrate more and more on the vocational self-concepts and the sense of self that individuals have to construct in order to develop the strategic mindset required by the current economic and social norms of employability.

2. THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COMPETENCIES NEEDED TO DESIGN ONE'S LIFE AND DIRECT ONE'S CAREER

To cope with this societal demand to construct one's life and career, individuals of liquid societies are seen as having to rely on different competencies. These competencies have been described by various authors using different terminologies.

For example, DeFillippi, Arthur and Rousseau (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) have constructed the notion of career competencies – or career capital – which they differentiate into three categories. The first one – *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 category – *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 endeavours in different life domains, in relation to their major expectations concerning existence.

Côté (1996, 1997) has proposed the concept of “identity capital”, which denotes what individuals ‘invest’ in ‘who they are’ (Côté, 1996, pp. 425-26). Côté stressed that such investments potentially produce future dividends in the “identity markets” of liquid societies. According to his analyzes, an identity capital refers to a ‘stable sense of self’ based on a variety of technical and social skills, collections of a relevant behaviours, participations in important social and occupational networks, social intelligence, etc. Such a capital comprises some “visible” components as diploma, group memberships, social networks, corporal *hexis* or deportment, clothing, way to talk, etc. It also comprises numerous “intangible” assets as various self-efficacy and self-determination beliefs, a capacity to relate to one's own experiences and interpret them in various ways, cognitive flexibility and complexity, self-monitoring, etc.

Most of the concepts created by psychologists or vocational psychologists to describe factors that play a major role in the ways people face career and life issues belong to this group of intangible assets. Self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) and feelings of self-determination in various situation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) have already been mentioned. But, some others may be added: abilities to decide both thoroughly and rapidly (Gati, 1986 ; Peterson, Sampson, Lenz, & Reardon, 2002), capability to spot certain opportunities and seize them (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999), adapt-ability (Savickas, 1997 ; 2005); power to integrate their career moves in a life story that makes sense to them, that is to say to “biographize” themselves (Delory-Momberger, 2009 ; Guichard,

2004; Savickas, 2005; Savickas, Nota, Rossier, Dauwalder, Duarte, Guichard, Soresi, van Esbroeck, & van Vianen, 2009).

Two categories of factors play a major role in the construction of the career and life designing competencies. The first one is the activities, interactions and interlocations, which individuals carry out in their different life settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 ; Law, 1981 ; Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986 ; Côté, 1997 ; Young, Valach & Collin, 2002). The second one refers to the modes of relating to these various experiences that individuals construct, namely the forms of reflexivity they develop.

As a consequence of their activity, interactions and interlocation in the different settings where they act (family, school, work, sports, community, church, etc.), individuals develop various knowledge (general knowledge, know how, etc.), different types of skills (technical ones, social ones, etc.), sets of beliefs, social representations, values, interests, attitudes, etc. Their whole forms the major components of the career and life designing competencies.

Indeed, in each of these settings: (1) certain social representations prevail (for example: about the social roles of men and women or about what means “to achieve something in life”); (2) certain values are in current use; (3) certain role models (real known persons or media figures) are admired; (4) certain types of activities are required, encouraged, discouraged, prohibited, etc., in such or such a person, depending on their position, age and gender; (5) certain interlocations are common practice (one speaks or not of such or such issue and one speaks of it, this way); (6) certain retroactions occur (one is or not recognised 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 (7) certain positioning are more or less strictly attributed to the different actors.

As regards young people, in liquid modernity, one of these settings plays currently an important role in the development of the career and life designing competencies: school (be it either elementary, or high-school, or college). First: because school experience occupies a large time in youth lives. Second: because school is organized everywhere in such a way it is a place of assessments, social comparisons and intense competition (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Gottfredson, 1981).

But, from one liquid society to another, there are some differences as regards the role attributed to school in youth socialization. For example, Van de Velde (2008) showed that in France, 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 go get right their choice of an academic or training curriculum, as educational pathways are linear and don’t allow any mistake. Differently, in Denmark, emerging adults are expected to “find themselves.” Therefore, they are encouraged to engage in 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.

Another kind of differences between “liquid countries” concerning school plays a role in the career and life designing competencies young people develop: According to the ways schools are organized and students selected, students learn to consider differently their future. Indeed 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. For example, numerous studies have shown that the current French school system, with its specific processes to select and distribute students², lead them to think about their future in referring 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) *surmising reflection*. Differently, the Finnish school organization plants the question of choosing a subject or a curriculum in an extracurricular future. 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? The way Finnish high-school students consider their future may be summarized by the following question: "who 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.

The second category of factors that play a major role in the construction of the career and life designing competencies refers to the modes of relating to these various experiences that individuals construct, namely the forms of reflexivity they develop. Indeed, as indicated in this chapter's first part, in liquid modernity individuals must design and direct their lives and careers. For that purpose, they need to take a reflexive stance on their various life experiences. More precisely, they need to consider them from different perspectives. One of these perspectives refers to the current norms of employability. To govern their career, people need to relate to their various experiences – in the different settings where they interact and dialogues or have interacted in dialogued in the past – in appropriate ways. They have to take stock of the various competencies (skills, capabilities, etc.) they have constructed on these diverse occasions. They need to become aware of what interested them most, of their values, beliefs, etc. They need to know what made them successful - or not - in such or such experiences (for example: to examine the role of such or such social network). In relating this way to their experiences, they precisely become aware of their capital of "knowing how" and "knowing whom". Such reflexivity probably fosters in addition a reflection on what matters in their lives: that is to say a reflection on the 'knowing why' issue. But as noticed previously, the purpose of such reflection is to make sense of one's life. It implies to relate to one's own diverse life experiences, not from the perspective of the current norms of employability, but in view of determining one's own life bearings, one's own life norms. The goal of this second form of reflexivity is then different: it is to determine the major

2 In the French school organization, the way high school students are distributed in the various curricula is state regulated. This regulation gives weight to the current teachers' judgments on their students' futures. This means, for example, that if teachers feel that a given student won't succeed next year in a general course of study, they'll propose him or her and his or her family to enroll on a vocational training. Not to comply with this « recommendation » is difficult and, in many cases, quite impossible.

perspectives that make a life meaningful to the person. As shown in the next paragraph, life designing interventions intend precisely to support people in this second kind of reflection.

The people's capabilities to relate in different ways to their various life experiences – the kinds of reflexivity they develop – depend both on the nature of these experiences and on the interactions and dialogues they engage in the different settings where they act. 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 valorisation 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 this 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 (general or current) life expectations.

Individuals' involvement in either such or 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 possess and on their gender (Oakley, 1972). In addition the experiences that the individuals can carry on 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 make 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 is the number of settings she participates in). 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 the one of another person. Individual agencies in this matter considerably differ and appear to be closely bound to each individual's social position. This is probably the reason why Grosjean and Sarnin observed (2002, p. 16) that “the almost exclusive attribution to the individuals of their career management (...) may appear as a progress to those who have latitude of choice in their system of activities, and as a social regression, doubled of a psychological ordeal, to the precarious workers, since they are put in the paradoxical situation of having to consider that their career depends on them whereas what they live is an undergone course of events.”

3. SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COMPETENCIES THEY NEED TO DESIGN THEIR CAREERS AND LIVES

Although the capital of competencies detained by a person to design his/her life and to govern his/her career can profoundly differ from another person's one, it is considered in liquid modernity that everyone may be helped to carry out this complex task. For this purpose, career officers or counsellors implement varied interventions, which can be categorized into three major types according to the intensity and the kind of reflection they require from clients.

3.1. Information (and Teaching How to Find Relevant Information)

Interventions forming this first class 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 programmes that prepare for such a job? Information about the recruiting procedures (resume, letter of application, etc.) is part of this class, which also includes programmes to teach how to find accurate and relevant information on the internet and from other adequate resources. As these interventions are mainly instructional, they don't ask clients to reflect on themselves and their experiences, although they predispose them to do so. They indeed drive individuals to ask questions about themselves in relation with the information they have received about the world of work and educational opportunities.

3.2. Career Guidance

The second type of interventions' goal is to help clients create or develop specific ways to relate to themselves and to their experiences for the purpose of constructing a vocational self-concept that matches the current social norms of employability: This means: an adaptable vocational self-concept made up of the diverse types of career competencies (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996) distinguished by researchers and forming a part of an encompassing identity capital (Côté, 1996). This requires clients engage in a certain type of reflection on themselves and their diverse experiences. Therefore they can be called career guidance or advising interventions.

These interventions help clients establish specific links between today's work activities and their own past, present and possible future activities in their different life domains. The core object of these interventions is about the competencies that are required to do 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 (on the occasion of their school, training, leisure, sport, job, family, etc., experiences), the competencies that clients may now construct and how.

These interventions aim at developing 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* (competencies elicitation guidance) or the competencies portfolios (for example: Aubret, 2001) and some career education workshops are prototypical examples of this kind of interventions. The former are targeted at adults having already a certain work experience. Differently, many career education workshops are mainly intended for students or emerging adults. This is the case of the workshops "Découverte des Activités Professionnelles and Projets Personnels" (Identifying occupational activities and personal plans) (Guichard, 2008a; for a presentation in English, see: Collin & Guichard, 2011). Their objectives are to help participants construct future expectations in terms of work activities (and not in terms of jobs, occupations or professions to avoid the typical stereotypes in these matters; Guichard, 2011). To that purpose, participants are led to consider the different

aspects of their current situation and to concentrate on the activities, the interactions and the dialogues they could put a lot into. During the workshop, participants have to (a) identify the various activities forming a job, (b) realize the importance of a variety of life experiences that plays an important role in the construction of competencies and interests, in the setting up of social networks and in the meeting with key figures who may smooth the transition to work, etc.; (c) consider all aspects of their current life (school, family, leisure, odd job, work experiences, sports, etc.) and analyse them in terms of activities, competencies, self-efficacy beliefs, resources, attitudes, etc.; (d) identify certain (mainly: work) activities they would like to do in the future; (e) become involved in activities that may be a training to (work) ones they expect to do in the future and (f) integrate all what they have discovered during this workshop in their current life.

3.3. Counseling for Life Designing

As showed in this chapter's second part, 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 a 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 a meaning to their lives and design them. This means assisting clients in finding the life bearings that will play the holding role in their lives: an adequate replacement for the relatively steady social and ideological framework and routines providing individuals with direction in solid societies, which are missing in liquid societies.

Reflecting on the perspectives which make their lives meaningful implies that people embark in dialogues with themselves and others. Therefore, interventions that aim to assist clients in developing such reflexivity take the shape of counselling dialogues. They are deliberation processes (Lhotellier, 2001) which help clients to look at their various experiences from various 'potential future perspectives' and give them a (never fully established) meaning. The development of reflexivity is particularly significant for adolescents and emerging adults, but will benefit just about anyone in autonomously constructing their careers.

4. "TO MAKE ONESELF SELF": A SYNTHESIS OF CURRENT RESEARCH ON THE SELF'S CONSTRUCTION INTENDED TO SERVE AS A BASIS FOR LIFE DESIGNING COUNSELLING

Because of this current social demand that individuals clarify their own norms so as to design their lives, different forms of counselling interventions were created in recent years to the purpose of helping clients in this endeavour. The Savickas (2005, 2011) career construction interview is a prototypical example of such interventions. It relies on a career

construction theory that Savickas (2005, p.43) summarized this way: “Career construction theory, simply stated, asserts that individuals construct their careers by imposing meaning on their vocational behavior and occupational experiences (...). Herein, career denotes a subjective construction that imposes personal meaning on past memories, present experiences, and future aspirations by weaving them into a life theme that patterns the individual’s work life. Thus, the subjective career that guides, regulates, and sustains vocational behaviour emerges from an active process of making meaning, not discovering pre-existing facts. It consists of a biographical reflexivity that is discursively produced and made “real” through vocational behavior. In telling career stories about their work experiences, individuals selectively highlight particular experiences to produce a narrative truth by which they live.”

As the career construction interview, the “entretien de conseil constructiviste en orientation” (Constructivist life designing interview) (Guichard, 2008b) refers to the same social constructivism’s major postulates. Indeed, in both approaches, individuals are not seen as the passive objects of external forces, but as “proactive agent[s]” whose prime activity is self-organization, that is, to establish and maintain order and continuity in their experience (Mahoney, 2002, p. 747). Individual development is considered as “an open, active system” that changes and re-stabilizes itself over time in order to achieve a balance between “ordering and disordering processes” (Mahoney, 2002, p. 749). Moreover, these two models rely on one of the major postulates of social constructionism: the one according to which language “constructs experience and is performative, a form of action” (Collin & Guichard, 2011). Their differences lie in the fact that the career construction interview put a greater emphasis on the past experiences, on the continuity and on the unity of the individuals’ construction (via the concept of life theme) than the other one. Without denying the importance of the past experiences, the continuity and unity in the individuals’ construction, the constructivist life designing interview refers to a synthesis – the *se faire soi* (to make oneself self) model (Guichard, 2004, 2005, 2009, Guichard & Dumora, 2008) – of current research that put a greater emphasis on the human identities’ plurality in liquid modernity and on the individuals’ searches for a unity through certain future perspectives that give their lives significance and meaning.

4.1. To Make Oneself Self

In liquid societies, individuals interact and dialogue in settings that are not necessarily consonant with each other. They develop a repertoire of more or less varied and heterogeneous experiences that lead them to construct diverse representations of themselves (Giddens, 1991, Gergen, 1991). To depict this plurality, the *se faire soi* model describes an individual identity as a dynamic system of subjective identity forms (SSIF). The construct of “subjective identity form” (SIF) describes each selves an individual constructs and implements (or has constructed and implemented as well as expects to construct and implement in the future) in a particular setting. This term aims to describe what psychologists usually name a self-concept or a self-schema. But it combines to these usual psychology approaches, the contributions of the works by sociologists, philosophers, psychoanalysts and by specialists of cognitive sciences and semiology. Without being able to enter here into the details of this synthesis, the example of some sociologists’ research may be mentioned, as

Dubar one's. Dubar (1998) showed indeed that all society proposes to its members a system of social labels that allows them to recognize others and to recognize and construct themselves while appropriating some of them. In addition, Dubar made clear that certain group of people sometimes created some new labels, which had – at first – a community value. In the same way, the "genealogy" analyses of Foucault (2010) about the "government of self" made clear that this government entailed the construction of a ways to relate to oneself and one's experiences, such as the individual defines him/herself from the perspective of a certain norm of excellence which is, in his/her eyes, a state of perfection that he/she wants to achieve.

A SIF can be roughly described as a set of ways of being, acting and interacting in accordance with a particular way of representing oneself – of conceiving oneself – within a given setting. For example, a young person at school can think of herself as "a good high-school science student" and in relation with this particular view of herself, (1) forms and implements some action scripts (e.g. at home, she does systematically all exercises in the math textbook that correspond to the day lesson), (2) develops some particular ways to relate to the "objects" and people in the school setting (e.g. she asserts that "mastering math and English is needed to succeed in today's world", she built a strong friendship with another student who admires her "as a real brain at maths"), (3) constructs some ways to relate to herself and her various experiences within this setting (e.g. she forms some generalization of self-observations, some particular self-efficacy beliefs, a certain feeling of self-determination, etc., all of them being more specific to this setting), (4) establishes some standards or ideals she strives to attain (e.g. she wants to understand the basics of the strings' theory in theoretical physics, she dreams to be admitted in an excellent college after high-school, etc.).

Some SIFs refer to various settings in which the individual interacts and communicates at a given moment of his or her life (for example: the young person mentioned above can also conceive herself according to the SIF of an excellent amateur swimmer). Other SIFs refer to expectations or the way one imagines oneself in the future (for example: this same person may picture herself as a doctoral student at the *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*), while other SIFs refer to past experiences which have had a lasting impression on the person (for example: this young person was fascinated by the stories told and explanations given by an elementary school mistress. Now, she dreams to "add something to the story").

The *se faire soi* model describes individual identity as an evolving system of subjective identity forms (SSIF). At any given moment, some SIFs hold generally a more central place than others in the organization of the SSIF of a given individual. The core SIFs are generally those which give rise to major expectations for the individual (either a major ideal to attain in a near future and/or an expected SIFs (ESIF) to achieve in a latter future). These ideals to attain of these expected SIFs lead the individual to imagine his/her future in relation to that or those perspective(s), which give consistency to his/her SSIF. In the previous example, the high-school science student SIF seems to be a major core one, when "amateur swimmer" is peripheral.

The more the person interacts and communicates in varied and relatively independent settings, the more his/her SSIF tends to be diversified (corresponding to a plurality of SIF) and dynamic. This means that in liquid societies, individuals – and as, we have already noticed, some more than others – build a broader repertoire of current or potential identities, and also modify these repertoires more easily than in more rigid, less diversified and more monolithic societies.

The *se faire soi* model posits that the dynamism of the SIF system, therefore of self's construction, originates in the tensions and diverse combinations of two types of reflexivity – ternary and dual. Ternary reflexivity is a “person dialogic interpretation” process. Anchored in semiotic processes, it refers to the concept of “person” as it was described by Peirce (Colapietro, 1989) and developed by Jacques (1991). According to these two authors, the person is both supra-individual (or interpersonal) and intra-individual. It is a continued dialogic process that articulates the three positions of the “I”, the “you” and the “he/she”. Thus, each speech act or turn takes the form of either an “I” that tells “you”, a “you” who answers “I”, or an “I” and “you” who refer to he/she. Each statement leads then to the production of a certain “interpretant,” that is to say of a certain understanding of the statement, and not of an understanding of what this statement might definitively mean (Atkin, 2010). Each interpretant is taken up again during the following speech act or turn, which leads to the production of a new interpretant. This type of reflexivity enables individuals to engage in an indefinite process of interpretations and re-interpretations of their past and present experiences. This process leads them to sketch out, and at times specify, new potential future prospects.

In contrast, dual reflexivity is a stabilizing factor. It permits individuals to constitute themselves as objects to themselves, from the point of view of a certain ideal they want to achieve (Foucault, 1982a; 1982b; 1983). During such a process, individuals define (and consecutively implement) some activities or behaviors to achieve a certain state of perfection in connection with the standards of this ideal. In adolescents or emerging adults (but not only in them), this ideal generally corresponds to a certain expected SIF related to a certain character's image with whom they identify. This expected SIF play then a decisive role in the organization of their subjective identity forms system (Dumora, 1990). Dual reflexivity seems to originate in the preverbal unification phenomenon of the human ‘I’, that Lacan (1977) described with the concept of “mirror stage”. This unification of oneself is based on an *expectation of being as this unified image of oneself* (which may be seen in a mirror). The individual wishes to become this eminently desirable image of him/herself that fascinates him/her and by which he/she creates a first self's synthesis. This emerging mode of relating to oneself and to one's present and potential experiences involves identification with the internalized image and constitutes a crystallization of a certain self.

4.2. The Constructivist Dialogue for Life Designing

The “entretien de conseil constructiviste en orientation” (constructivist life designing dialogue), which is based on this “se faire soi” model, intend to help people elicit their major expectations (be them ideals they want to attain or expected SIF they expect to achieve) and find ways (activities, interactions, resources, etc.) to increase their chances of reaching this goal (and to subsequently modify their SSIF if necessary) and also commit themselves to progressing it. To do so, most clients need to become aware of what actually constitutes each of their SIFs (or at least their core ones) and describe the current organization of their SSIF (to delineate those that are central and those that are more peripheral).

The constructivist life designing interview is similar – in its general principles and in its structure – to other career counselling interviews (for example, Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2009). It begins with the establishment of a working alliance between counsellor

and client. It continues with an analysis of and a reflection on their experiences by the clients. It ends with a personal synthesis, a plan of action and a closure phase. Obviously, the specifics of this process vary according to the kind of issue a person faces.

During these constructivist interviews, the dual and ternary forms of reflexivity appear as the major development factors of the clients' views of their situations and their problems. In fact, according to their situation features, to their reflection progresses and to the counseling interview phases, they tend to rely mainly on either one or the other. For example, Thomas (a counseling interview transcribed by Piraud, 2009) used mainly ternary reflexivity during his counseling interviews. Thomas was a senior high school sophomore in a science program who had entered amateur racing cyclist activities. For years, he trained while picturing himself in the future wearing the yellow jersey on the Tour de France podium. Thomas's identified with the character of the Tour of France winner, via a dual reflexivity process described, notably, by Dumora (1990) as a "desire to be like". This major expected SIF unified for years Thomas' system of SIF. It led him to commit himself to intense (and very demanding) physical activity to be prepared for the racing cyclist job. At the beginning of his sequence of counselling, Thomas realized that, in spite of his considerable efforts, he will never achieve his dream of wearing the yellow Tour de France jersey. At best, he will run in a professional team pack, a prospect he cannot accept.

Thomas' first interview deals mainly with the issue of how to announce this conclusion to his trainer, who – Thomas said – considered him a little bit as his own son. Indeed, it seems that the trainer identified Thomas as the marvelous son – the Tour de France winner – he never had. Over the course of counseling, Thomas produced a large series of interpretants – in this case of possible prospects – allowing him to order in various ways some events that characterized his past experiences. On each occasion, he selected, weighted and articulated in a specific way some events. This resulted in the emergence and the consideration of possible expected SIF: (1) professional soccer player? (2) In the army? (3) Sports coach? (4) Sports physiotherapist? (5) Dietitian? Eventually, two years after the first interview, Thomas underwent the tests for admission to *gendarmerie*, a kind of state police the organization of which is close to the army's one: a job that matches – according to Thomas's private view (Guichard, 2007; 2011) of this job – his desire of order, his interest in sports activities, and his caring of others.

Mr. G uses of reflexivity (a counseling interview transcribed by Bangali, 2011: see Bangali & Guichard, 2012) was different from Thomas' ones. Mr. G (29 years of age) earned a doctoral degree in neurosciences. After two postdoctoral years in the USA, he sought a research position in a private company. During the counseling interviews, Mr. G stuck to the vocational expected SIF he constructed earlier, notably when he wrote his doctoral dissertation: "Researcher in neurosciences". He favoured the dual reflection processes and relied on the vocational identification he developed when he was a doctoral student. His reflection, during the counselling interviews involved a supplementary process of ternary reflection to specify this vocational expected SIF and find new attributes. Hopefully, this form will be recognized, in the near future as an actual career SIF validated by a recruiter from a pharmaceutical company, where Mr. G anticipated he may find a suitable job. The ternary reflection processes that Mr. G carried out were second to the dual reflection ones. These dialogic processes aimed to precise establish vocational expectation (identification) from the point of view of the recruiter from a potential company. The recruiter and company were relatively clear in Mr. G's mind.

These two cases can be summarized in the old language of Ginzberg, Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad, and Herma (1951). During the constructivist counselling interviews, Mr. G was performing a process of *specification* and *realization*. For this purpose, he used the ternary form of reflexivity only as complement to dual reflexivity in order to refine its outcome and make it more operational. Differently, Thomas displayed a process of *exploring* his life in order to *crystallize* and unify it from a certain future perspective. He was involved in a process of self-reconstruction: of reshaping his system of SIF. With this end in view, during the counselling sessions, he used the ternary form of reflexivity to construct a series of tentative expected SIF that might make his life meaningful. It is only after a while that the dual process of reflexivity manifests itself as a complement to the ternary form. It led Thomas identify with the character of the *gendarme*, an identification that permits him to crystallize his system of SIF from that perspective (at least for a time).

As shown by these two examples, the two forms of reflexivity can combine in different ways during the counselling interviews according to the client's quest. The ternary form appears more deeply solicited when clients need to remodel their SIF system. But is only a complement to the dual one when the stakes are not so high. Nevertheless, these two forms need to combine in some ways to arrive to a positive issue. Indeed, an exclusive privilege granted to the dual form could lead clients to quickly commit themselves to self-construction into a SIF that appears then to them as a major expectation: an attitude close to what Marcia (1966) named foreclosure. On the other hand, relying exclusively on the ternary reflexivity may lead clients to enter an indefinite process of interpretations and re-interpretations of their various experiences. This could result in production of a series of expected SIFs, without they ever undertake to carry out any of them.

CONCLUSION

The emerging of "liquid modernity" and "flexible organization" had major consequences with regards to vocational development interventions. Indeed the career issues people have now to face became *more complex, vaster and deeper* than previously. They are *more complex* because what was a vocational choice at the beginning of the 20th century, and had become a career development issue in the 1950s, now is described as individuals' capacity to invest their competencies in work assignments that they consider beneficial to themselves (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Vocational issues are also *vaster* as such work investments require people to be able to examine all aspects of their lives and assess the career capital (in terms of *knowing how and knowing whom*) that they have constructed on the occasion of their various experiences in all their life domains.

Finally, vocational issues have become *deeper* as to make up their minds, people also need to answer the question of *knowing why* (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1996). This means they have to think about what makes their lives meaningful, determine their life priorities (priorities that will need to be redefined during the life course) and the style of life that they yearn for. Indeed, today's liquid societies do not provide people with indisputable life models. Therefore, people have to determine for themselves the fundamental values and key elements that give their life meaning and, consequently, direction. All these reasons lead to the

assertion that what was seen only as vocational development is now clearly encompassed in a life-designing process (Savickas & al., 2009).

In such a context, people may be counselled or advised in two major ways in order to design their lives and construct their working paths. The career construction interview (Savickas, 2005, 2011) and the constructivist life designing dialogue (Guichard, 2004, 2005, 2008b, 2009) belong to a same category. Their common core purpose is to help people develop their own reflexivity so as to elicit their own life norms. Interventions having such a goal may be named *life design counselling*. The other type of interventions may be called *career education* or *career guidance*. Their objective is different: it is to teach people to relate to their various experiences from the point of view of the current norms of employability (for example: to examine all their life domains in order to take stock of all competencies they have developed during their various experiences).

These two major types of interventions – aiming to help people either elicit their own life norms or relate to their life experiences from the perspective of the current norms of employability – imply that clients develop and combine in different ways the two kinds of reflexivity: dual and ternary. The ternary type of reflexivity – the prototypical form of which is an intrapersonal dialogue articulating the “I”, “you” and “he/she” points of view – appear to be particularly involved when people need to elicit what make their lives meaningful to them.

Such reflection is not easy. Moreover, there are big differences in people, as regards their immediate capabilities to engage in such thinking. In liquid societies, people are indeed deprived of the stable system of beliefs and representations, of institutions, etc. that helped them make sense of their daily routines in solid modernity. They have to construct their own personal life bearings. And to face such difficult issues, a growing number of people think to find an easy answer via an absolute adhesion to some cults, religious fundamentalism and/or totalitarian political views: all of these views being based on a same absolute separation between “us” (the elect, the true humans, the ones who know, etc.) and “them” (the “un-elect”, the “sub-humans”, the “others”). Therefore, the supply of counselling interventions for life designing appears to be one of the major stakes in liquid societies, not only for individuals, but also for the maintenance of societies based on democratic ideals.

The observation of such trends in a growing number of people living in liquid modernity leads to a more fundamental question: Are our conceptions – of life design counselling and of career guidance – sufficient in our current world? As we have noted, they concentrate on the care for the self and the government of self, to use Foucault terminology. Of course, this care for the self involves in general a care for the close others (those who matter to self). But is it enough in a world of nearly 8 billion inhabitants, where resources (for example: water) are limited, where there is an important deficit of “decent work”, where there are major crisis (e.g. financial ones, dislodge populations, etc.), global warming etc.? Shouldn't the care for the distant others and for a fair global development be included in everyone life designing thoughts? And if so: how to rephrase our fundamental life designing and career construction problems?

This is probably one of the more important issues in liquid modernity. Such a major ethical consideration might probably rely both on Ricoeur's definition of “ethical intention” (1992) [“a triad where oneself, close others and distant others are equally honoured: to live well, with and for others, in fair institutions”] and Jonas (1984) imperative of responsibility: “Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life” (p. 11).

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