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CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEXT

Festschrift for Fred Vondracek

VIII
THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE LIFE-SPAN DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF YOUNG ADULT'S IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

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Abstract

The concepts of micro-, meso- and macro- system and of (notably dyadic) interactions are central in the Vondracek's approach to career development. These concepts combined with those of fields and habitus (Bourdieu, 1979), of "modes of relating to self" (Foucault, 1984) and of social representations (Moscovici, 1988) permit to describe the construction's processes of the flexible identities that are required in liquid modernity. In the first part of this chapter, we examine these sociological based approaches to show that social interactions allow the sharing of the social world with the individual and manifest the individual agency and his/her abilities of be a social actor as well. Social interactions contribute fully to the evolving shape of

the individual-context relationships and to identity construction. These psychosocial and social theories represent distinct perspectives that are increasingly compatible with one another and with approaches enlightening career development processes. In a second part of the chapter, we seek to underline that such concepts' combination could also serve as a basis for self designing interventions. Indeed on the basis of these different approaches, the making oneself model (Guichard, 2009) can be seen as a theoretical framework for counseling dialogues for young people which permits them to develop a self reflection on their main social interactions and activities in their daily life. This approach will be presented and discussed in its ability to increase new perspectives for their future life. The third part of this chapter intends notably to give some illustrations showing the importance of mesosystem transitions in these processes. Several examples concerning young adults in different kind of situations of training in a French context (apprentices, vocational high school pupils, doctoral students) will be proposed to enlighten the role of counseling situations to empower young adults identity construction.

Keywords: mesosystem, field, habitus, modes of relating to self, transition, self-identity.

Introduction

With the "*life-span developmental approach to career development*", Fred W. Vondracek and his colleagues Richard M. Lerner and John E. Schulenberg (1983, 1986) have deeply renewed the

research in this particular field. Their approach has given rise in France to numerous developments we intend to describe in this chapter. In the first part we will discuss how the combination of Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2005) and Baltes' (1983; Baltes et al., 1980) conceptual models, made by Vondracek and his colleagues, via a number of concepts adapted from other models and analyses, has progressively led to understanding the subjective identity as a dynamic system of subjective identity forms. In the second and the third parts we set out some types of interventions related to career guidance support (based on this model), which are meant to assist persons in directing either their professional and training pathways, or more generally, their life. In these sections the intervention methodologies are described and illustrated by short case studies. Thus, this chapter stresses that the theoretical integrated model proposed by Vondracek and his colleagues (Vondracek, Ford, & Porfeli, 2014) contributes to the provision of new prospects for youth vocational guidance. The approach of the "subjective identity forms system" unveils the systemic nature of the construction of meaning processes, which occur during counseling dialogues, and is also at the basis of a variety of interventions for life and career designing.

1. From "A life-span developmental approach to career development" to the concept of a "dynamic system of subjective identity forms"

Vondracek (2001) and Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, (1983, 1986) conceived their approach to the intention-forming and decision-making processes through the combination of Bronfebrenner's model of *human development ecology* (1979) and Baltes' concepts of *life-span developmental psychology*

(1983). Vondracek et al. especially retained Bronfenbrenner's idea that human development happens in an environment that is constituted by a set of intertwined contexts, combined to each other. In order to analyze this environment, Bronfenbrenner distinguishes four context levels:

- The micro-system where the individual acts, interacts and enters into dialogue with others.
- The meso-system that describes the interrelations between these micro-systems.
- The exo-system which represents the manifestation of the influence produced on the individual by certain micro-systems to which he/she is linked through other individuals who interact with them, while he/she is not directly involved in such micro-systems;
- The macro-system that integrates all the subordinated systems as part of a set forming the culture and the ethos of a given society.

Bronfenbrenner's model does not explain the genesis of behaviors, representations, and beliefs by reference to conditioning. In this respect, his thinking is close to Paul Baltes's *life-span developmental psychology* which is based on a set of fundamental proposals, which emphasize development occurs across one's entire life, that it is multidirectional and multidimensional, that it follows growth and decline tendencies, with manifestations of plasticity. In this way, the influences produced by the different contexts on the individuals result from the different forms of actions which are processed in these contexts, and from emotions, identifications, and representations developed, in particular, through actions undertaken jointly, and particularly during dyadic interactions.

These analyses of life-long career development have been combined with other approaches in order to provide a solid theoretical basis for interventions for life and career designing. Thus, Bourdieu's theories (1979, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) have led to an emphasis on the eminently social character of individual development. According to Bourdieu, a society (i.e. Bronfenbrenner's macro-system) is a social cosmos that combines different social fields, each of them having its own logic and its normative conception of value. Consequently, the interactions that develop in certain micro-systems are generally not independent from the laws of the social field in which they are situated. For instance, French youth is educated in a schooling system – a schooling field – where the prevailing conception of the law of value is to consider that being a good student is to obtain strong academic credentials in the "abstract disciplines", particularly in the scientific ones. This characteristic has obviously played an important role in the activities, the interactions and the strategies displayed by the different stakeholders (pupils, teachers, etc.) in the micro-system which is formed by a certain class in a certain educational institution. The operating socialization in these different fields leads the individual to the construction of a certain – lasting but not unchanging – *habitus*, which is his/her personal way of assimilating his/her various learnings and the representations he/she has forged during the different contexts of interaction. Consequently, we understand that individuals build up their individualities according to their own interpretations of the ongoing particular laws of value that are situated in the different micro- and meso-systems within which they interact. For instance, it means that young people who attend school in France at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21th can both accept the law of value which applies

to it and behave in accordance with the "logic of excellence" [= competing with oneself and with other students to be the best at school in view of entering the most valued universities] described by Dumora (1990), or reject this law with an alternative anti-school speech, arguing that one cannot learn anything useful in this place and in this way (Willis, 1977).

If Bourdieu's theories can complete Vondracek et al.'s pattern towards a more accurate description of the socialization consequences in the social systems which are based on certain norms, Malrieu's approaches (2003) and Curie's (2000) emphasize in a different manner the psycho-social individual processes which take part in the construction of this socialized subjectivity. These authors underline the major role of certain systems which in our societies are involved in the construction of this socialized subjectivity. They mainly focus on the activities in these systems, the logic of action every individual works out in each of them according to the purposes he/she aims at, the relations between these different systems and the transactions operated by these individuals between all these different logics of action in order to elaborate a reviewable model of life which embodies the main perspective every individual gives to his/her existence at any given moment. Malrieu has described the concept of personalization as a *"subjective construction of the agents which organize the representations, the vision of the ideal-self, and the connections of this self with the other people, all of them through some experience which initiates him and gets him accustomed by any way to the institutions and to a world of works"* (Baubion-Broye, 2005, p. 164). This concept describes the particular process of construction and transformation running in this model of life. This personalization includes interactions with other people and a double phenomenon of identification and "identization".

As for the latest Foucault's works (1984), they help us to further develop Malrieu's and Curie's analysis by showing the importance of the reflexivity processes in the construction of individual subjectivities. Foucault explains that the individual subject is fundamentally a form which is not always, nor everywhere, the same with itself. Fundamentally speaking, the individual subject consists of different "modes of relationships to himself and to his experiences." It is precisely these "modes of the individual's relationship to the self" that endow the subjective identity with certain substantial, more or less lasting, identities which are derived from these "modes of relationship to the self." Individual subjects are consequently plural: they refer by different manners to themselves, they speak through different voices (Gergen, 1991), they can take different "I-positions" (Hermans & Kempen, 1993), etc. Foucault points out that this subject is at the same time subjugated to and endowed with autonomy. It is subjugated by the forms of political power prevailing in a certain society and particularly by the "governmentality" techniques applied in this society. Those techniques compel individuals to develop certain modes of relationships to themselves and to their experiences in order to elaborate, among other things, different "file selves" (Harré, 1984, p.70), as for example a résumé, which has to comply with the institution which rules the field: the "file-master", as Harré named it. However, this subject is at the same time capable of governing himself by the definition of his/her own norms of life and the development of a personal aesthetics of existence, which should consist in a certain state of perfection he/she is willing to achieve according to the resources needed (particularly the techniques of the self) to enter into this self-transformation process.

The synthesis of these analyses (combined with some references to certain concepts of cognitive psychology, in particular

those related to the phenomena of memorization and actualization of information related to the self and to the action scripts) has eventually led to describe the subjective identity as a "dynamic system of subjective identity forms" (Guichard, 2004, 2005, 2009). The subjective identity is thus considered both as plural (made out of subjective identity forms), as well as unified (forming a system), and in constant (dynamic) evolution. A subjective identity form (SIF) is both a set of manners of being, acting, interacting and entering into dialogue in a certain context, as well as a certain vision of oneself, of the others, and the meaningful objects of this context. For example, when a young man says "as far as I'm concerned in high school, I'm mostly interested in my friends", he starts to describe his SIF of high school student. Some SIFs are related to current situations, others to past situations and others to expected situations in the future. In the organization of the system formed by these SIFs, certain ones hold a major place for they correspond to a sphere of life or activity where the individual expects to achieve something which matters for him/her (for instance in his/her professional career). The organization of this SIF system is transformed firstly because of the phenomena which impact this individual's life, who is socialized in different social contexts of his/her society (maturation, learning, ageing, accidents, meeting, etc.), and secondly because of the ways this individual relates him/herself to these phenomena which impact the course of his/her life: the way he/she perceives them, interprets them, symbolizes them, etc.

Two kinds of forms of reflexivity can be distinguished in order to describe the interpretations by individuals of the phenomena which impact the course of their life. One of them is called the "dual reflexivity" and leads these individuals to relate to themselves from the perspective of the perfection they want to achieve (Erikson, 1980; Lacan, 1977; Foucault, 1984). The second one can

be described as "ternary or trinitarian reflexivity" since it takes the form of a dialogue within the individual or between people during which "I say to you", "you answer me", and "I and you refer to he or she" (Colapietro, 1989; Jacques, 1991): this trinitarian reflexivity enables people to relate to these very phenomena and to combine them in order to produce new perspectives out of them, which would give sense and a renewed direction to their life. Both of these forms of reflexivity are particularly activated during the career and life designing interventions, three of which are presented in the following paragraphs with different observations made during their implementation.

2. Three constructivist interventions in guidance

The previous analyses suggest making a difference between two important categories of career and life designing interventions (Guichard, 2015): on one hand, education and career guidance interventions, and on the other hand, life-designing ones.

Guidance interventions (either they take the form of interviews or educational activities) provide support for people's thinking in order to help them elaborate a flexible conception of the self which would suit to the employability conditions of nowadays and enable them to take the required decisions to enter the labor market and to be in control of their career: during these career and education counseling interventions, their reflexivity is guided by the academic and professional norms of today's selectivity entrance. From a different point of view, life-designing interventions aim at providing clients with assistance in the definition of the norms which give sense to their life, that is to say the definition of both the fundamental prospects for their future and the efficient ways to achieve these

expectations. As suggests Jacques's theory of *primum relationis* (1991), the dialogic form seems to be an essential part of these last interventions: the dialogue between the counselor and the client indeed institutes new effective "I – you" and "I – you to he or she" relations which enable the individual to depart from the beaten tracks of his/her daily and usual prospects and thus give him/her the possibility to define new ones.

Obviously in the daily practical experience of the career counselors, the interventions are not as different as the previous dichotomy might lead one to think: both kinds of purposes are always pursued in accordance to the moment of the intervention, even though certain types of interventions are mainly focused on the life designing processes (like it is in the first two types of interventions described below), or alternatively on career guidance, like in the guidance workshops which conclude this chapter.

2.1.1. The interviews for constructivist counseling or dialogues for life-designing

Interviews for constructivist counseling, or dialogues for life-designing, represent a first example of tools which offer the possibility to discover meaningful life contexts for young adults who want to think about their professional prospects. This type of intervention is based on interviews which reveal how contexts appear in speeches. These contexts are expressed with words that relate to them through speech. We will expose two case studies to exemplify how the system of subjective identity form is transformed throughout the interviews, which are performed within the framework of constructivist counseling or dialogues for life-designing interventions.

2.1.2. The principles of constructivist dialogues

This form of interview is mainly (but not merely) intended for teenagers and emerging adults (Guichard, 2008). These young people, who often need to rapidly make a decision about their future, generally express stereotyped and inaccurate training and study intentions related to the professional and employment opportunities. This kind of interview is therefore designed to help them realize what their best interests are, understand the role of contexts in which they interact, and clarify the direction they want to give to their life. The constructivist interview represents a supportive context for reflection activity. In it the counselor begins with the young individual's request as he expresses it, and continues throughout three or four interviews in which the counselor offers support so as to enable the individual to express the most essential questions for him/her. This process involves the exploration of central and secondary life contexts of the young individual, contexts which allow the expression of subjective identity forms (Guichard, 2009). This interview method aims at helping them (Guichard, 2009) basically to elicit some expected SIF (notably, occupational ones), the actualization of which they wish to be committed to.

This type of intervention is structured in three parts and involves three to five interviews:

- Building the working alliance
- The client's analysis and reflection
- The synthesis of the reflection on the project and the conclusion of the collaboration

We briefly summarize the different stages:

As we have mentioned, the first part is about building the working alliance, which is a fundamental stage designed to ensure that the intervention takes place in an atmosphere of mutual trust, and that the principles for the work ahead could be defined. During the constructivist intervention, it could be useful to remind the client that she/he is the one who has to lead the process of reflection and that the counselor does not give answers but only provides support so that she/he can elaborate her/his reflection further. It is essential that the client will seek actively information about training courses or professional activities so that the work can be completed.

The second stage is the core of the intervention. The counselor should bring the client to realize what the most important fields of her/his current life are, these fields being micro-contexts in which the individual is directly involved. It can be expected that a teenager would mention the sphere of family or school, but she/he will even more likely evoke those related to sporting or leisure activities practiced with friends. Some of them will also possibly mention the sphere of civic commitment, religion or jobs (for the older ones). The interview is conducted in a semi-directive or non-directive approach. Some contexts of the client's past life could also be called up if they happen to have played an important role in her/his life and in the construction of her/his professional aspirations. Young people who have, for instance, played for many years a musical instrument and then stopped could mention it with regret or simply reject this experience. This part of the interview is thus about bringing the clients to define the important spheres of their lives, the past ones and the current ones. This process brings them to mention important activities, either they love them or reject them. It enables them to set up a map of the different spheres of their life. Throughout the interview, the counselor needs to focus on

bringing the clients to think about each of their involvements and the links they establish between all these involvements in the main contexts. As a second step, the counselor leads the clients to evoke their expectations related to the different spheres of their lives: how do they see themselves in a given context? What types of relationships do they want to build? What types of activities are they planning to develop? The clients will have to take steps and seek information in order to answer these questions. The counselor plays an important role in the process because she/he can encourage them to undertake the design of subjective identity forms (SIF) which could empower them to become more emancipated towards their past experiences and their social environment. This perspective generally leads to the reorganization of the subjective identity forms system: some SIFs could acquire a central role, while the importance of others could decrease; new SIFs could be designed as well, some of them in accordance with self-expectations that could open up new avenues worth exploring for personal and/or professional guidance. This intervention is concluded by reviewing all that has been accomplished and by bringing up practical avenues for action.

Two case studies from such interviews with two 20 year-old women are presented below. They underline how the words in speeches are organized to express the main contexts in the individual's life (Cohen-Scali & Pouyaud, 2014). In this analysis, certain words appear to be prototypical words in a given important context of life, and their combination with others reveals a set of semantically meaningful mental worlds. The two young women have consulted a counselor who led similar constructivist dialogues throughout four meetings spread over four months. These young women agreed to let their interviews be recorded and used for the purpose of scientific research. Therefore, the

interviews were entirely transcribed, and then processed with textual-data analysis software.

2.1.2 Identification of semantically meaningful mental worlds produced on the occasion of dialogues for life designing

The first case corresponds to the situation of Marie. Marie is a 20 year-old women. She met the counselor because she felt lost, "dropped-out" and did not know what to do. She graduated in arts, but she vacillated between carrying on in this specialty and changing it. Many ideas passed through her head and everything was quite confusing for her. She needed clarification. Her family was working in the agricultural field (vineyard) for generations. She could take over this activity, but she was very ambivalent towards this project. The relationship she had with her mother, who managed this activity, was both positive and negative. Although she appreciated the work of the vine, she wanted to prove to her mother that she could get to do something in her life on her own. This desire for emancipation was expressed by her interests in the arts, creativity, and main dimensions associated, for her, with aesthetics and beauty. The counselor tried with her in the first interview to clarify these different elements. The first interview of Marie was analyzed with IRAMUTEQ[4] textual data processing software. The software was used to perform an analysis of similarity on the discourse produced during the interview. This analysis illustrates, through the identification of used semantic worlds, the appearance of subjective identity forms in

[4] It is possible de download the software from http://www.iramuteq.org/

the discourse. The software is free of copyright. It is based on the co-occurrence analysis of the most frequently used words in the data grouped into clusters. In this example, the similarities tree presented below (Figure 1) reveals the links between the central action scripts, relationships, and objects mobilized in the discourse. Semantic worlds appear, and the main nodes of meaning emerge from the data set, which we interpret in terms of Marie's system of subjective identity forms corresponding to her current life at the time of the first interview.

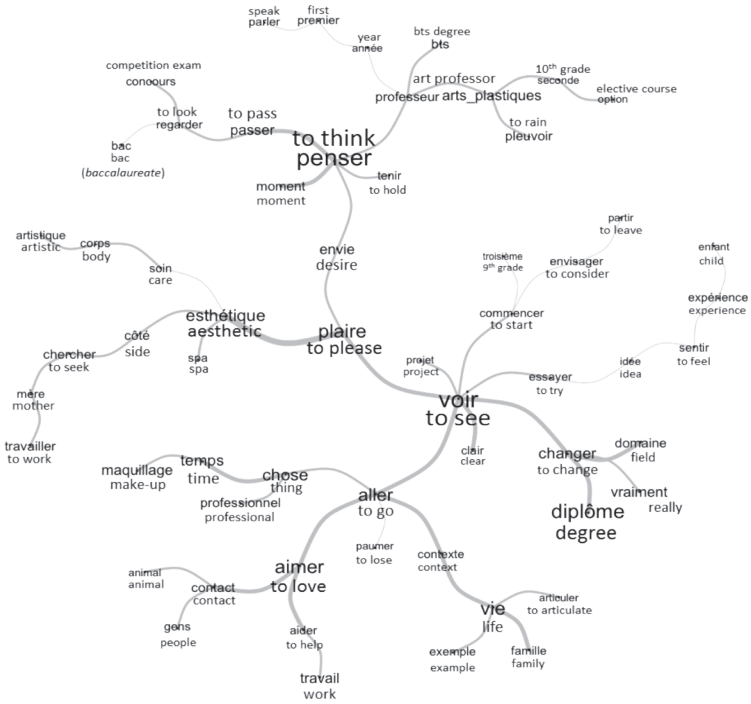

Figure 1: The semantic worlds that appear in Marie's first interview:

This chart allows one to identify how the main constituents of subjective identity forms are expressed in: Share scripts, relationships with others, the relationships to self and objects. The most

used significant words are those represented in bigger fonts in the chart. Seven words form the backbone of Marie's discourse: *Penser*/to think, *Voir*/to see, *Diplôme*/Diploma, *Aimer*/to love, *Plaire*/to please, *Aller*/to go, *Esthétique*/Aesthetics, are central to different semantic spaces. Self- relationships are expressed around the word "*aimer*/to love" (love the contact with animals, people, enjoy helping others), and around the word "*Vie*/-Life" that appears at the co-occurrence with "*Famille*/Family", "*Expérience*/ Experience", "*Enfant*/Child". These two nodes can be interpreted as "These are the main characteristics that define me. This is how I define myself". "The only person emerging from the global discourse is Marie's mother, associated with "*Travailler*/ Working", "*Chercher*/to look for", "Côté/side" and "*Esthétique*/ Aesthetics" which refers to Marie's ambivalence regarding the role of her mother in her professional future, torn between her taste for aesthetics and working on the family farm. Relationships to objects/things refer in the case of Marie to the vocational objects: "*diplômes*/diplomas, "*Esthétique*/aesthetics", "*soin*/care", "*corps*/ body", linked to the verb "*plaire*/to please". Finally, action scripts are expressed in the verbs: "*Voir*/-to see", "*Aller*/to go" which can be understood as exploration of the environment in response to her doubts. The emerging subjective identity form in this interview is therefore based on the expression of interest in terms of resources, and the need to think, see and engage in change, while emphasizing the doubt and ambivalence of her projects.

2.1.3 Evolution in the position of lexical semantic worlds over the constructivist dialogues

The presentation of Emilie's case aims to illustrate how the identification and processing of the subjective identity forms

system occurs during various interviews that take place in the constructivist dialogues for life designing described above. These dialogues allow, on the one hand, the different life contexts of the person to be described, including the objects, relations, and important characters and how they are related to one another. On the other hand, they promote the emergence of processes of thinking and learning about oneself and how to use dialogue situations to think about one's future, as this illustration shows.

Emilie got four interviews in 4 months. She got good grades until the age of 15. Then, when she entered high school, her school results suddenly tumbled. She decided to pursue vocational studies and she was primarily engaged in the personal assistance sector. But she realized that she did not like this sector and she finally chose to reorient in the field of hairdressing and obtained her professional degree. She worked as an apprentice in a salon when she met the counselor. She is not satisfied with this activity, and said "this is not a job for me, I do not see myself as a hairdresser!"

In this interview, Alceste software was used to analyze the discourse by ranking of word appearance/co-occurrence grouped in clusters based on a top-down hierarchical analysis. As in Marie's case, the software was used here in an exploratory perspective to describe the text data and group them into categories. The program generated an empirical classification of text units linked to the co-occurrences model classified in units, which we interpreted as "the semantically meaningful mental worlds" reflected in the data, and indicators of the content of Emilie's Subjective Identity Forms. Then, an analysis of the evolution of these forms in four interviews allowed us to understand the dynamic aspect of her Subjective Identity Forms System. The purpose here is therefore not to make

a scientific demonstration but to illustrate how the SIF and this type of intervention can be analyzed through indicators and methodologies.

Three associations of words appeared at the first interview. These combinations of words can be interpreted by reference to the transcript of the interview and to the context in which they appear in the discourse.

- In the first group, key words were*: School*, *Diploma, Competition, Necessity, to Catch up, Reality*. These words together characterize a past subjective identity form which can be summarized as "Emilie as a bad student." To perform this interpretation, it was important to identify the contexts of utterance of these words in the discourse. It was observed that the discourse expresses Emilie's past academic difficulties and her low educational level.
- In the second set, the key words were: *Question, Person*. This referred to Emilie's questions about herself, about her life that she described as unsatisfactory. This cluster showed a meta-reflexive moment in the interview.
- In the third group, the key words were: *Things, to Do, to Make, to Succeed*, *Trust*. Emilie expressed her lack of self-confidence in many everyday activities. It was time for reflection and distancing herself from the above mentioned biographical elements.

During this first session, we observed the emergence of Emilie's system of Subjective Identity Forms and her engagement in a reflexive process.

With the second interview, four word associations were identified in the textual analysis:

- In the first group, words such as *English, Level, England, to Imagine, Education, Future*, appeared. This combination of words was interpreted as reflecting the emergence of an Anticipated Subjective Identity Form which might be summarized as "Emilie in England."
- In the second set, the key words were *Context, Life, Style, Family, to Come back, to Compare*. This was a part of the interview referring to her family who was identified as both a resource, a support, but also as a barrier to the realization of her projects. It referred to a current Subjective Identity Form "Emilie as a family member."
- In the third group, several words came together: *Brother, Sister, to Establish, Relations, Twin, to Explain*. Then, Emilie recalled her difficult relationship with her twin brother, who appeared to her as an obstacle to her development. This combination of words referred to a current Subjective Identity Form: "Emilie as a sister."
- In the fourth group were the words: *to Dance, Piano, Soccer, to Support, Action, Pleasure*. A new Anticipated Identity Form was expressed because these words referred to how she saw herself in the future, "Emilie as a classical pianist and dancer," that is to say, someone who has leisure "bourgeois" or is "distinguished" (if we refer to Bourdieu's work, 1979).

Thus, the second interview allowed for the emergence of two anticipated Subjective Identity Forms (ASIF). Following this second stage, Emilie begun to consider her future in a new light.

With the third interview, three sets of textual units appeared:

- In the first group, the following words were associated: to *Talk, to Say, to Explain*. The interview was then cen-

tered on the importance of seizing dialogue opportunities with others, whether friends, mother, or counselor. These expressions referred to the realization that dialogue was a support, a resource for use in case of problems and probably promoted the development of skills for life designing. This was a time of the interview which referred to the meta-reflexive processes.

- In the second set the words: to *Think, Thing, Friends, Together* were associated. Emilie discussed the role of the social network in which she did not consider herself as sufficiently involved. These findings emphasized the emergence of a reflective moment in this third interview.
- The third group included the words to *Think, Mother, Dependency, to Stay*. She saw her mother as an obstacle to her development because she did not want her to change her profession. These were words that showed again the existence of reflective processes.

The third interview showed the evolution of Emilie's ability to engage in reflection. It became more autonomous; it acquired ways of questioning, i.e., reflective skills. She was able to identify the obstacles to her professional and personal development.

The fourth interview was a summary of the different elements identified over the course of the dialogues. Key activities necessary to achieve the aspects of herself that Emilie wanted to develop were defined.

Life designing dialogues helped to identify several processes involved in self-construction:

- Anticipated Subjective Identity Forms emerged from the second dialogue, when the identity system began to evolve.

- The reflective times appeared as long monologues allowing the person to revisit her memories in the light of new perceptions.
- Times of meta-reflection appeared, linked to the progressive acquisition of a method to think about what she wanted for herself, including the use of dialogues.

These dialogues therefore allowed her to identify how different embedded life contexts contributed to certain self-perceptions at a given time and also to make a change in these representations by facilitating reflection on the relationships within these contexts.

2.2 The Activity System Inventory (ASI)

The Activity System Inventory (Le Blanc, 1993) is a structured method to help clients construct their lives. It is based on the theoretical approach of the "activity system model" (Curie & Hajjar, 1987; Curie, Hajjar et al, 1990; Curie & Dupuy, 1994), which includes the fundamental propositions of Malrieu on development and active socialization (Malrieu & Malrieu, 1973; Malrieu, 2003). The Activity System Inventory focuses specifically on the individuals' assets of investments in their life contexts and the links of exchange and resource created between microsystems, this with a view to adapting to conflict experiences with the environment. In this sense, this inventory is a way of outlining the meso-systemic transactions of clients, from which the counselors can co-construct with them personal life designing strategies, that is to say, transformation strategies of themselves and their contexts of life in a reciprocal adjustment perspective. For Malrieu, individuals are not only built

during a passive acculturation to contexts in which they live, but also through an active process, a creative role in which they make choices and they rebuild these contexts in order to fit them with their characteristics (values, activities, etc.).

The model assumes a division of individual activities into four "areas of life": family, occupational, personal and social environment. These areas or micro-systems are integrated relatively autonomously within a broader system, which correspond to the meso-system.

The personalization process (which includes adaptability and empowerment) is partly related to the possibility for individuals to build relationships (resources and/or constraints) between activities within a particular area of life or between domains. By doing this, individuals construct meanings about their actions and life commitments which are more or less efficient from the point of view of self-realization. This systemic meaning construction through actions, in interaction with contexts, is close to the notion of system of Subjective Identity Forms.

There are two concepts that are used for describing the regulation performed at the micro- and meso-system levels. The first concept is that of "action model." It describes the control of each independent sub-domain. Action model is mainly used to associate, in an area of life, goals and means of action for achieving these goals. The second concept is the "life model", which accounts for the overall regulation of the activity system. The life model is fundamental to understanding the personalization processes. Its function is to map patterns of action of each subsystem. It allows for the objectivation of inconsistencies and contradictions between the areas, and to prioritize them according to values and life commitments. The four life domains (subsystem or microsystem) are where the goals, actions and means are taking place; the activity system

(mesosystem, SFIS) is more about the regulation processes for personalization. The relation between the action models and the life model requires understanding of the goals of the action, then the means used and finally the sense of action. It is in the back and forth between the action and the sense of action where the dynamic personalization and self-construction is rooted, in the sense that both levels allow both an adjustment to the daily contexts and self-development in the life course. Specifically, the Activity System Inventory is an ensemble of interviews, which consists of several successive card-sorting exercises, in which the individual is required to classify "goals-activities". These "goals-activities" both refer to goals and means used in every area of life. The requested ranking (in terms of valuation, collection of resources or constraints) is a task that involves the individual in reviewing his/her action models and life model. This protocol, which exists in several versions for different audiences *ISA-Adultes (ASI-Adults)* (Curie et al., 1990), *ISA-Jeunes (ASI-Young people)* (Le Blanc, 1993), *ISA-Adultes en formation (ASI-Adults in continuing education)* (Dupuy, 1998), *ISA-Adultes travailleurs à temps partiel (ASI-adults part-time workers)* (Rosa, 2000), *ISA-Jeunes étudiants* (*ASI-Young highly skilled)* (Le Blanc, Dupuy & Rossi, 2000), *ISA cadre (ASI-Business Executives)* (Guibert, 2005), and *ISA-Informatisé (ASI-computerized)* (Pouyaud, 2014) allows the clients and counselors co-construction of a representation of the clients' activity system as adaptive resources.

The following example illustrates the use of this approach in the context of a counseling intervention. Ludivine was a 23 year-old woman. She lived with her mother and was looking for a job for two and a half years after failing the high-school leaving certificate. She came once to see a counselor with the idea of resuming her training, perhaps in the hotel trade.

Shortly after this interview, she found a job at McDonald's, but she continued to see the counselor regularly. A regular support relationship developed. After two years at McDonald's, she wanted to leave her job to resume studies. She was hired as a cashier and continues to seek an employer for resuming her training. That was when she settled in with her friend. The counselor proposed to her various supports as collective career education modules which would strengthen her studies project. But despite her motivation, Ludivine's studies project did not progress. The counselor felt that new obstacles regularly appeared in her life that made the development process difficult (to take care of a puppy, to receive friends, to take care of her mother...). When her search became more concrete (Internship offers, replies to offers ...) she always found a reason not to go through. Eventually she even came to doubt her project and wondered if she should not return to work at McDonald's. Faced with these self-doubts in a changing context that impaired Ludivine's agency in her living space, the counselor suggested using a computerized version of the ASI (Pouyaud, 2014), the objective of which was presented as follows: to elicit how she saw herself in life, including the resources and obstacles that she considered as involved in her different spheres of life. Here is how the counselor described the contribution of the ASI during this counseling intervention; *"Working in this way has enabled us to have exchanges around the concept of family. The situation she experienced as a child (painful separation, an invasive mother who encouraged little), her place among her siblings, anxieties about managing her everyday life (in particular budget) ... and thus I learned that she was anxious to take care of her health for fear of hearing bad news, that the social dimension was the most important right now, she wanted to be accepted and recognized by her friends, even if she did*

not share their values ... The possibilities to support her were thus multiplied. Ludivine acted as if the social field were most important for her, as if working for her were a means, a first step towards the fulfillment of her future life, but not necessarily a priority. Although she was very motivated during the talks, she became aware of the stakes and obstacles. We approached again the field of health and so she could express herself on the difficulties she encountered with her doctor. We worked on the possibility to pass a comprehensive health check (which showed dysfunction of the thyroid). Two weeks later, the girl had made an appointment with the psychologist of the local mission to work on different obstacles. After three months, Ludivine got her driving license, found an internship to complete the project and to enroll in the course of "accounting assistant".

These counselor's remarks show how the ASI facilitated the overhauling of Ludivine's action models in each of the important areas for her. But beyond micro-contexts, it was the joint inquiry with the counselor about the meaning and coordination of areas of life that made them an engine of development. The meaning constructed by Ludivine among the various activities was the counselor's resource to promote her ability to change her environment.

2.3 Identifying Occupational Activities and Personal Plans: An updated workshop method (IOAPP)

If the above example focuses on the link between micro- and meso- system, individuals are nevertheless located, more broadly, in exo- and macro-systems. One challenge is how to take into account the representational system (described for example in terms of system operations or the SIFS) and its embeddedness

in a broader cultural and social context. The IOAPP (Guichard, 2008b) is a career education workshop intended for groups of teenagers or young adults. Unlike the two procedures described above, this workshop aims to fundamentally guide the clients' thinking toward their employability and their future career transitions by taking into account the social context and specificities of the life course. It uses the participants' collective work to question and develop the major determinants of career- and life-construction, mainly gender stereotypes and prestige. One particularity of this career workshop is to start from the activities, which play a role in the career and life construction processes, and to question them collectively as personal and social representations. Thus, the IOAPP approach aims to help participants think about their future, both systematically and ecologically, by an exploration of the interdependency links between, on the one hand, the individual and dual actions (at the micro- and meso-systemic levels) and, on the other hand, the social and historical environment (notably at the exo- and macro-systemic levels) where these actions are performed. Early versions of this method have been proposed in the 80s (Guichard, 1987, 1988, 1991) and then renewed in 2008 to adapt to the new challenges of career and current socio-economic conditions (Guichard, 2008a).

The starting point of this method is an observation concerning the conditions for the development of future intentions among young people, particularly influenced by their stereotypes, and their social and educational positions. The overall idea is to implement diverse collective situations to enrich and diversify the clients' representations of their occupational and personal futures. For this purpose, the workshop provides cognitive tasks in the course of which participants have to collectively confront their "simplistic" representations of them-

selves, of schools, of careers, and of the factors that determine the careers and life course. Current, past, and future intended activities of each person are at the heart of the development process and serve as a support for the exercises, whose main objectives are summarized as follows:

- "Identifying activities that the participants would like to pursue in their future career (and/or, where applicable, in their personal life).
- Reviewing their current situation in relation to the activities (interactions and interlocutions) which are theirs (in particular their self-efficacy beliefs and their various self-concepts).
- Getting more involved in particular activities, as well as in new activities and new contexts, to develop new skills, new self-efficacy beliefs and new dimensions of self-concepts related to the future activities that tempt them today"(Guichard, 2008a, p. 8).

Exercises are designed to help participants make connections between their personal, educational or extracurricular competencies and possible professional activities, build more articulated visions of careers, identify various elements that facilitate the transition to work, and discover ways to construct skills other than academic learning. Given the social importance of academic success in career advancement, representations enrichment aims also to help students (especially those failing at school) consider school experience as a form of training among others (without denying its role). The correlates of such enrichment can be an increase in self-esteem and development of different self-efficacy beliefs (Guichard, 1992; Guichard & Dosnon, 2000).

The workshop proposes specifically to alternate small group exercises, in which exchanges are favored by a coach on specific topics, and "introspection" sequences of individual reflections, allowing for the incorporation of the team-work contributions in the individual's personal experience of life. The groups' sequences are based on a pre-built deck of cards, and individual sequences on grid questionnaires.

Two group exercises are the backbone of the method: the first one involves the use of a deck of cards based on interviews of professionals. 41 professionals were interviewed and described their occupations in terms of the concrete activities they carried out each day. Each of these activities was listed on a card. Groups of 3 or 4 participants are formed. Each group is given a deck of cards combining the activities described by three of these professionals. The task is similar to the one involved in the card game "Happy families": each group has to find, by grouping cards, the number and the names of the occupations represented. Because some activities are common to multiple occupations, and young people often have simple representations of the occupations, this classification task is difficult and raises discussions within the group. Most groups find more than the three "hidden" occupations in the game. When the coach has revealed the actual number and names of all the involved occupations, then it is time to reopen talks collectively by confronting the simplified representations, the imagined details and surprises raised by the activities forming the considered occupations.

A second important time in the workshops, after working on professional activities, is an exploration of the "activities contributing to a career." The process is pretty much the same as the previous one, as it also involves classifying a deck of cards. To build these cards, the same 41 professionals were asked about the main events, encounters, qualifications, experiences,

etc., which contributed to their vocational and personal life stories. Each of these stories was cut to allocate the elements on separate cards. In the second exercise, the same groups of participants work with the set-point to rebuild the life paths of the professionals of whom they discovered previously the current career activities. They must also determine the age and sex of the likely professional. Again, the task involves their stereotypes and simplified knowledge of the careers' determinants: stereotypes about male and female occupations, about jobs where one must make a lot of studies, about fairly straight careers. It also involves a progressive awareness of the role of continuing education, of luck and of unexpected encounters, etc. All of these elements are themes that the coach can reopen, confront and discuss collectively afterwards.

The personal reflection time is arranged and guided to allow a dialectic self-activity-context likely to support a change and a commitment to action. Again, it is the reflection on the individual's movements between the different context levels that is the basis of development and guidance.

Conclusion

For more than 30 years, Vondracek and his colleagues (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1983, 1986) proposed a life span developmental approach to career development, an original perspective to take into account the dynamic relationships between the subsystems involved in the lives of individuals. These subsystems forming the life systems influence each other because they are in continuous interaction. Recently, Vondracek, Ford and Porfeli (2014), noted that people develop, in the different contexts in which they are inserted, a variety of complex activities that

evolve during their lives. The implementation of new behaviors appears as a central process in building a career or a direction for the future. In this context, the career counselor supports self-exploration, activities and new behaviors. This systemic approach confirms major works of psychology and sociology that have been developed in France and that have sought to bring to light the place of life contexts in the transformation of individuals. In the field of career counseling, the model of Subjective Forms Identity System (Guichard, 2009) revisits some aspects of these approaches by integrating them into a new conception of identity seen as a dynamic set. In this concept, as in that of Vondracek, the process of building professional intentions is not done at a time and once and for all. Rather, this process is continuous and takes place during shared activities, leisure, work and training. For Guichard, counseling dialogues have a crucial role in the construction of the personal and vocational self-concepts of young people by facilitating the construction of self-expectations in certain situations and possibly generating new behaviors. The variety of methodologies and observations and illustrations discussed in this chapter emphasize the value of this model to better understand the identity transformations as well as to develop useful interventions for the counselors.

Thus, these different models illuminate, in a complementary manner, the psychological processes involved in career construction behaviors. They help to highlight the identity issues that young adults in Western societies of the 21st century need to cope with.

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