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Thinking about youth's vocational counseling in the context of renewed career and Life Design (LD) interventions

In the current framework of important evolutions in the world of work, the article underlines that most of the career counseling practices keep being designed on the basis of the environment-individual fit models. However, the current difficulties that individuals face today request new types of career counseling practices, giving more space for the reflexivity development and to interactions with the counselor and other important persons. The Life Design counseling approach appears as the most useful framework to support the individuals in adapting to new social and professional challenges because they focuse on identity construction. The article proposes to integrate two models conceived in the Life Design framework together, with another model enlighting psychosocial identity (ego-ecology) to build a complete and comprehensive approach of career counselling aiming to reframe identity. This approach has been used to construct two career counselling individual and collective devices for helping young adults.

Key words: Life Design, Identity, Career construction, Young adults

During the 20th century, guidance counselors helped teenagers and young people make a career choice once and for all. Standardized tools, such as psycho-technical tests, were universally used for diagnostic purposes and professional aptitude evaluation. Interventions took the form of advice focused on bringing the results of these evaluations into line with the evidence they knew about the needs of the labour market. The digital revolution and the globalization of the economy have gradually changed the relations between employers and employees. Young people can no longer consider having the same career for their entire lives and face many professional changes. These changes have led to a rethinking of guidance counselling interventions, which must now mobilize more intensely the reflexivity of clients and influence the new method of creating their identity. This four-part paper brings to light these different evolutions in the guidance interventions and leads to propose a device articulating several approaches adopting the Life Design (LD) approach. Part 1 retraces changes in interventions since the early days of educational and vocational

guidance. Then (part 2), the two central characteristics of current models are described, namely the importance of context and identity. In Part 3, the main models corresponding to the LD paradigm are discussed. Finally, in part 4, a renewed model of guidance interventions for individuals and groups based on LD perspectives is presented. The whole article argues for the development of interventions integrating several types of LD interviews which usually are implemented separately. The goal is to propose more comprehensive interventions in orientation, likely to mobilize individual reflexivity in many dimensions of life, to help each person to face complex situations more serenely.

1. 20th century: short and standardized interventions in school and vocational guidance

School and vocational guidance corresponds to a field of research and a field of practice closely connected to the evolution of work, since its emergence during the industrial revolution in 1850 (Danvers, 1988). It was from 1908 that the works of Cornell University engineer Frank Parsons, interested in helping young people to make professional choices, gave birth to the first research and guidance interventions (Zunker, 1998). Based on the guidance procedures that he developed to help 80 students choose a profession described in his book on choosing a vocation, Parsons defined principles that would sustainably mark theoretical approaches and guidance practices. Thus, according to him three dimensions must be taken into account to help guidance. For the first one, it is necessary to take into account the need for individuals to develop an understanding of themselves, the identification of their abilities, interests, resources, and qualities... Concerning the second one, the individuals need to know the working conditions, the advantages and the disadvantages, the opportunities and the possible projects related to the work situations. For the third one, these two dimensions must be related. This approach corresponds to the first paradigm of guidance, the "vocational guidance paradigm" (Savickas, 2015). According to this paradigm, guidance should help individuals to "find a place" in the world of work by matching trades to people. This design was well suited to the context of stability of trades and activities or with work was relatively simple and routine. Guidance interventions in this period focus on identifying and assessing abilities. The first guidance conference held in Boston in 1910 revealed the need to develop methods to assess the potential of each person and to recruit school guidance specialists (Zunker, 1998). This trend was confirmed in 1913 with the creation of the National Vocational Guidance Association in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where research, once again, emphasized the importance of assessing professional efficiency skills (Zunker, 1998). With the First World War, many tests were designed with the aim to match human traits and job characteristics. This approach was subsequently developed under the term "trait-factor approach", thanks

in particular to the work produced by the University of Minnesota Industrial Relations Center (Davis, 2005). In 1927, Edward K. Strong from Stanford University published the first version of the inventory of professional interests (Savickas, 1999). The results of his research are considered very important in guidance practices. Guidance practices are also strongly influenced by Edmund G. Williamson's "directive counselling", a method consisting of short and highly standardized encounters. This method of intervention with students comprises six stages (analysis, synthesis, diagnosis, prognosis, advice and follow-up) during which the counselor gives precise indications to follow (Williamson, 1965, p. 528 as cited in Zunker, 1998). However, in the 1940s another approach began to develop: the "non-directive counselling" developed by Carl Rogers . Rogers views the verbalization process and the interactions between the counselor and the client as essential for the development of self-knowledge (Rogers, 1942). Although the human experience begins to be taken into account more broadly, the question of the measurement of human skills and the rapid distribution of populations in a developing labour market will remain central concerns for researchers and practitioners of the vocational guidance field during the 20th century. From the 1950s, the needs for skills are more numerous and varied. With diversification of industrial production work activities have become more complex, and employees can expect a linear or cyclical career path. Interventions aim at helping them to identify their attitudes, beliefs, and skills for career progression (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986; Bujold & Gingras, 2000). From the 70's the educational approach to career assumes that people have to develop guidance skills throughout their life. Emerging educational programs are based on the development of new processes such as career awareness, career exploration, career planning, etc. (Blustein & Flum, 1999; Pelletier, Noiseux, & Bujold, 1974; Guichard, 2015). The paradigms of vocational guidance and career education are the main references of research and guidance practices until the 2000s. These approaches have produced guidance interventions guided by the needs of the labor market and companies. Workers are perceived as a mass divided into subgroups based on their commonalities and differences. The singular individual, with his/her own experience, does not exist in the labor market shaped by Taylorism.

The world of work in the 21st century has evolved considerably and is described by Savickas (2015) as VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous). It is becoming more difficult to plan for a stable and sustainable career and counselors are being led to further promote people's adaptability and to help them prepare for various scenarios for their lives and transitions for which they also must be prepared. (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2005). A new model has been devised by researchers (Savickas and al., 2009; Guichard, 2009) to integrate these new contexts of life: the Life Design paradigm.

2. Life Design: a counseling approach in context

The Life Design approach responds to the fact that the career is no longer limited to a single company and highlights the increased role of the individual in the construction of his/her professional life. This approach assumes that the individual will actively build his/her life at work through the social interactions that s/he develops during his/her life and in various contexts. The career is primarily conceived in its subjective dimension. This approach signals a change in the conception of human beings, who appear "plural", speaking with different voices, or combining several various "selves" (Guichard, 2015). This conception also highlights the fact that individual behaviours are less immediately determined by the early experiences or the past than it was thought. Finally, individuals are conceived of as trying to make sense of their lives (Guichard, 2005, 2015). Life Design is part of a socio-constructivist and contextualist perspective in which the individual changes his/her identity thanks to the social interactions and actions that are meaningful to him/her. This socio-constructivist perspective brings to light the role of experience, social interactions and life contexts for self-construction (McMahon & Watson, 2010). The self is the culmination of a process of constructing meaning attributed to actions and experiences and promoting self-awareness and self-knowledge (McLean, 2016).

2.1. Self-construction in a variety of contexts

Today, the daily life of individuals takes place in various environments, which implies, in order to approach the reality of the identity processes implemented, to adopt a systemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). From this point of view, it can be assumed that individuals interact in *microsystems*, which propose models of behaviour, roles, and in which the most important emotional attachments develop. In these microsystems, individuals experience bi-directional influences (from self to others and vice versa) that shape the structure of their identity. *Mesosystems* comprise the connections between the immediate environments in which the individual evolves and involve the development of strategies to reconcile sometimes very different contexts, in terms of social roles, culture and norms. These systems refer to the ecological transitional stages experienced by individuals moving from one life context to another (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). *Exosystems* in turn bring together contexts in which individuals are not directly active but may be affected by the events that occur in them. For teenagers, an important exosystem is, among others, the professional activity of their parents (Mortimer and al. 2002; Mortimer 2003). The *macrosystem* brings together all the subsystems and corresponds to the beliefs, values and culture that permeate all the other contexts of life. It manifests itself in written or non-written principles that regulate the behaviour of individuals. It can be considered that macrosystem includes both the social norms installed, as well as the new collective identities, likely to constitute references or offers of

creating one's own identity. In the macrosystem, individuals find the information to give meaning and value to their behaviour. Finally, the *chronosystem* refers to how each level influences others. It refers to historical time, whether it is events taking place in a society and influencing a person or events in social or personal life that alter the individual journey and identity. It is in these contexts, especially with the increase in the number of exosystems, that identity is built and on which career and life design interventions should rely today.

2.2. The role of dialogical and narrative processes to promote reflection on the relation to life contexts

The construction of identity is a process of making predictions about what our future might be, given what we know about our past and present. According to Kate C. McLean, "It is an incredible strength of the human mind to be able to construct identities, to create a sense of stability in a certain world, and to bring ourselves into existence through acts of refection and imagination" (McLean, 2016, p. 4). LD interventions aim to promote reflexivity. Reflexivity is based on the capacity of each person to produce inner dialogues or renewed narratives allowing the co-construction of mental spaces where thought can evolve. Archer (2012) defines mirroring as the exercise of one's mental abilities in order to consider or reconsider one's relationship to one's social context. From this point of view, it is essential that everyone engages in reflexive deliberation, which implies interpersonal and intra-subjective exchanges because of the absence of social guidance explaining what to do when faced with a new situation. For Life Design approaches, the meaning of experience and career building is related to the ability of individuals to reflect by producing stories about their lives. Two processes appear central in Life Design approaches to develop reflectivity: dialogues and narration.

The dialogues allow to experiment with one's personal identity in several ways (Van Langenhove & Harré, 1999). First, they allow the individual to develop his/her agency. Then, they constitute the possibility of elaborating social representations relating to the world around him/her. The dialogues also favor the evaluation of events and thus contribute to the biographical construction. Finally, these dialogical processes make it possible to develop intentionality. For Guichard (2009), the dialogues allow individuals to both project themselves into the future but also to imagine themselves in new scenarios thanks to the feedback offered by the advisor. These feedbacks, to be constructive, must favor the relations with the outside world, support the projection of the individual in this external world. For this, the counselor must be creative and use his/her personal and professional experience to provide metaphors, concepts and ideas. These proposals help the person to project himself or herself, to find an echo of their experience, their feelings (Guichard, Bangali, Cohen-Scali, Pouyaud, & Robinet, 2017). During the dialogues, alternating

times of self-transformation (Cardoso, Silva, Gonçalves, & Duarte, 2014) and times of stabilization of self-perceptions, the identity can be revisited.

The narrations make it possible to construct more stable "totalizations" of oneself. For McAdams (1993), identity, which develops in the late teens, is an "integrated life story". The teenager would begin to build his/her life as a personal myth through storytelling, based on the pre-narrative and narrative experiences of childhood. The narration is what allows the two poles of *idem-ipse* identity to hold together (Ricoeur, 1992). The dialectical relationship between *idem* (being the same in time) and *ipse* (being the one we want to become) corresponds to the dynamics of identity construction particularly at work in guidance interventions. McAdams (1993), for example, invites young people to describe episodes in their lives as if they were the chapters of a book. The narrative identity that is developed in this type of exercise appears as a space "in-between" (Pouyaud, 2015). "Narratives are what make life possible and language is a tool for building *ipse* identity" (Pouyaud, 2015, p. 63). The privileged instrument of identity construction according to the Life Design approach is the semi-directive interview. Techniques to help the individual to explore and deepen her thinking are used (Guichard et al., 2017). The working alliance is a particularly important time because it is to present to the person the process and therefore to underline the role of the reflexivity activity throughout the intervention. The person is invited to take action in "self-inquiry" (Thievenaz, 2019), from the beginning of the intervention. Life Design's interventions can be based on several theoretical approaches. In the following section, three approaches are mentioned, two of which are part of a Life Design perspective and the third appears as a psychosocial framework that complements the two previous ones.

3. Models of interventions in career and Life Design

Interventions aimed at helping people build their lives involve mobilizing both the reflexivity about their biography, their past and their life contexts (we could talk about personal identity) and a reflection on their relationship to social groups and its values (we could talk about social identity). These two types of reflection can be implemented as part of LD interventions based on the three models mentioned below.

3.1. Career Construction Interview (CCI)

The CCI (Savickas, 2012) aims to support the individual to develop from a set of micro-narrations by the counselor, the implementation of a process of building a narrative identity. This is done by linking micro-narrations to a macro-narration, called a portrait of life. This portrait of life brings together, in a sort of metaphor, perceived life experiences, taking the form of a theme of life. Each stage of this process is the result of co-construction. The counselor asks a series of 5 questions that

lead the client to recall his/her childhood memories and describe certain activities (Savickas, 2005, 2012). These questions are:

- Who did you admire most when you were 5-6 years old?
- Which magazines, which TV shows do you prefer?
- What are your three of the earliest memories?
- What is your favorite story?
- What is your favorite motto?

The stories produced by the client must take narrative forms including a beginning, an intrigue, a denouement. Then they are put in shape and the counselor proposes an impressionist "portrait of self", which is discussed with the client. Based on this portrait, the counselor and the client imagine possible directions of development that can modify the portrait to be more in conformity with what is desired.

This type of rapidly sketched model is centred on the construction of a narrative from memories of past and recent experiences. The career-construction interview is usually done in two sessions. This spreading over time allows the counselor to rework the material collected during the first session in the course of the second interview. During the second session, the life portrait is drawn up and action lines defined. The whole of the intervention brings to light the portrait of life, which is a kind of relatively stable and global narrative identity. It links the individual with his/her past and leads to a totalizing representation of him/herself.

3.2. The self-construction model

This model (Guichard, 2005) seeks to understand the way in which individuals make their environment meaningful, through the significance they ascribe to their actions, the choices and the arbitrations they make (Guichard, 2009). It was developed from notions of life domains or spheres of life, found in the model of the system of activities of Curie, Hajjar, Marquié, and Roque (1990). In this model, the aim is to bring to light the subjective identity and to make it evolve by the dialogue with the counselor. Subjective Identity Forms (SIF) are subjective identities that correspond to many self-reports, objects, activities, or people in certain contexts. Each of these SIFs refers to a certain vision of oneself, others, significant objects in a certain sphere of life, as well as a set of affects, feelings, emotions experienced in a certain way. The contexts of daily life have a very important role for the development of self-reflection. The LD dialogues focused on this model aim at exploring subjective forms of identity in relation to certain contexts of life and their linking. Some of these forms are major at the time of the interview, others are past and still play a role, others can be anticipated. These anticipated subjective Identity Forms (ASIF) allow reorganizations of subjective identity and innovations. The intervention is done in three or four stages of dialogue. During the first dialogue, the client explores the activities in the spheres of life in a global way, then the second and

third dialogues go into the details of the activities for each of the contexts of life. The last dialogue is devoted to the identification of self-expectations and the actions to be taken to bring about the subjective forms of identity envisaged. This model adopts a more analytical approach than the previous one, since it is a question of studying in a detailed way the activities as perceived by the individuals and to evoke during the exchanges the types of reports that the individual maintains in various specific situations. In addition, this type of approach is particularly focused on self-perception in the present and the analysis of current activities.

3.3. The ego-ecology of Marisa Zavalloni

Previous models focus on analysing the biography of individuals and their personal identity. The natural social categories of belonging to the individual constitute his/her social context, his/her social identity, and have an important role in reflecting on his/her future. In this ego-ecological model, Zavalloni (2007) aims at taking into account the "social background", i.e. the way in which the person perceives him/herself as a man/woman, a ninth grade pupil, a footballer, the way he/she refers to major social categories shared with others. Zavalloni's ego-ecological approach (Zavalloni & Louis-Guérin, 1984; Zavalloni, 2007) allows the consultant to reflect on his/her social categories of belonging, in their positive/negative aspects, in the dimensions that are associated with oneself, and those associated with the no-self. Such overview underlines the importance of social representations concerning categories of belonging and helps to question them and to underline their complexity. They also show that one sees oneself as a woman/man in a certain way and makes it possible to think of the singularity and the hybridity of the social categories. This approach, mainly used to describe psychosocial identity could be used in vocational guidance. It should lead the person to reflect and become aware of his/her way of perceiving and living his/her social categories and to change these perceptions, so that they are more in accordance with the wishes.

Life Design individual and collective counselling interventions that are currently being tested, are based on these three models of identity construction. The objective that led to the development of these global interventions incorporating several models was the willingness to take into account both the contexts of life, actions and activities conducted in each context and social categories of belonging and their perception. It is therefore a question of implementing interventions capable of favoring reflexivity concerning several dimensions of life, to allow the taking into account of the relations of determination of the various contexts. We believe that these types of more comprehensive interventions are likely to drive change, develop adaptability and increase awareness of one's ability to act and control one's life.

4. The two models of psychosocial interventions in Life Design

Individual and collective counselling devices combining these various approaches and favoring the reflection of the individual from her interactions with the contexts have been imagined. The implementation of such devices implies a good mastery of the semi-directive interviews and of the forms of intervention specific to each model. It is important that the counselor has knowledge of the three theoretical models and identity processes. In the individual device, we first implement the CCI, then the LD dialogues and finally, we can dedicate the last session to the explanation and analysis of the membership and social categories in accordance with the approach of ego-ecology. This last phase can lead to the co-realization of a work such as photos, drawings or others. In the collective intervention, only the self-esteem approach and consultative dialogues are taken over. Both types of devices have been designed for use with teenagers and young adults.

4.1. Individual Life Design Interventions

This individual device takes place in five interview sessions. The first step is setting up the working alliance. This is an important time during which the request is made explicit and the communication contract established. The counselor asks, "What can I do for you?" (Savickas, 2012). Then, the counselor asks the client to locate the main biographical elements, particularly those relating to training and work. The relationship to work or school is explored during this first interview session. At the end of this interview, the counselor can ask the client to take pictures of some of his/her life contexts that seem most representative of what s/he perceives. For example, during an intervention, a 25-year-old woman, Alina (who left her home country, Romania, five years before the intervention) who had an artistic background and worked in a restaurant with a work contract, expresses what brings her for the meeting with the counselor. She says that she feels she is wasting time working as a waitress because she wants to go back to performing arts, but at the same time she says she really needs this purely bread-and-butter work. She also says that she feels she cannot make art anymore and that makes her very anxious. It is agreed that she will take some pictures of her workplace and come back with these photos for a later session. In the second step, the counselor implements the career building interview and asks the five questions. The counselor notes the answers. Sometimes the client does it too, during the interview. Often the client reworks her answers after the session. The third step is the co-elaboration of the portrait of life. Alina's portrait of life, based on the answers to the five questions, emphasizes that she would like to change but encounters blockages, that she is afraid to assert herself. Her life portrait presents her as a feminist activist with strong values. She wants to have "a real job" and to become a "great professional". She is interested in photography. During the third interview, the counselor leads the client to make links

between her portrait of life and her everyday activities. Then it is time to begin the LD Dialogues of the self-construction model. It consists of the exploration of the client's current activities in different spheres of life. The pictures taken by the client can serve as a basis for deepening the exploration of the relationships she has with certain contexts and the identification of Subjective Identity Forms. For example, from the pictures taken at Alina's workplace and from her comments during the third interview, it can be concluded that even though her work is very hard physically, her workplace is also a friendly place, bringing together many young foreigners, who are, like her, far from their families, some of whom are students, and that it is an emotional and social resource for her. She says she has the feeling of finding a family in this community where people help each other. In the fourth session, the main SIF are described in greater detail. It is possible to build the cartography of not only current SIF but also anticipated SIF, those in which the client would like to be realized (Guichard, 2008; Guichard et al., 2017). Further research is also carried out, using an ego-ecological interview where the social categories that relate to major SIF are explored. For example, Alina explains that her major SIF is her job as a waitress in a restaurant. We then work on the category Waitress, then on other categories that appear important for her, the categories of Woman and Artist. The last interview session is devoted to an assessment of the intervention: Did the intervention answer the question asked at the beginning? How to summarize the current identity? What are the defined objectives? What obstacles are expected? How is it planned to solve them? What actions are implemented? Alina, for example, during the last interview explains that she and her partner have decided to get married. This gives her a great deal of confidence in starting a family and solving problems related to her nationality. She will be able to benefit from a dual nationality. On a professional level, she plans to continue working in the restaurant while planning to do a stage makeup training. She takes pictures of her makeup creations and puts them on a blog she has just created. She wants to gradually become known in this line of work in order to be able to live from it. Also, she plans to follow a training in the field of making up and body drawings.

What appears with such a device is that clients have clearer ideas about their situation, know better what they want, and what they want to give up, which matters. They also seem to discover certain aspects of themselves or revisit others. The narrations and dialogues, as well as the development of creative activities promote the valorisation and the refocusing of the self.

4.2. Collective Life Design Intervention

The collective device is based on the same principles of co-construction (Cohen-Scali & Pouyaud, 2019). The purpose of this type of device is to encourage social interactions between individuals and to promote the identification of categories of thought and social categories *ad hoc* that should encourage self-reflection in others.

The group is then a source of emulation on the individuals and the co-construction can be done on the basis of collective productions. This intervention is based mainly on Guichard's model of LD dialogues (Guichard et al., 2017). It takes place in four stages. It requires homogeneous groups of 8 to 10 people and the presence of facilitators trained in psychosocial animation. Each facilitator has a notepad, a pen, possibly large sheets and a table. The facilitator gives the instructions and notes the consensual answers. The intervention can be performed in one day. The first stage consists of a group discussion on given themes. For example, the theme of guidance: How does everyone see his or her future? How does everyone imagine the next year of their life? How does everyone see the work? What are everyone's expectations? The facilitator tries to show the similarities and the differences in the group concerning their representations. S/he notes on a large sheet the main and secondary expectations of group.

At the second stage, young people are invited to identify their main spheres of life, their activities. For this, they gather in smaller groups of three or four. They explore together the sphere of school, family, recreation, etc., and the animator goes to see each of them to stimulate the exploration of spheres of life. It is possible to limit the exploration to a single sphere. For example, the instruction may be "When you are at school, what is your favourite activity and why? How do you see yourself in this activity?" The facilitator asks that young people identify the common ways they see each other and the differences. Responses are noted on a sheet. The participants do the collective cartography that corresponds to the socio-ecological space of the group. In stage three, the facilitator says: "Let each of you think about the collective card, referring it to yourself. You have 5 minutes". Does it look like you or not? How and what are the differences? What is really different from me? Based on this reflection, the facilitator asks everyone to imagine their own cartography concerning "me today" "me tomorrow, as I would like to be". Individual cartographies can be displayed and everyone can view them and ask questions to the other members. There are exchanges from these individual cartographies. The fourth, final stage is an evaluation phase. The group recomposes itself for one last activity which consists in going back to the answers which were formulated at the beginning of the intervention, regarding the expectations on one's guidance and questions "Did you get any answers? What old or new questions you would like to ask?" Following this intervention, young people are given the opportunity to meet an individual counselor. These steps require some experience from the facilitator, and involve accepting not to give ready-made answers.

5. Conclusion

The study of guidance interventions implemented since the beginning of the 20th century shows important changes in the individual's conception of work. During

the Industrial Revolution and the prevalence of Taylorism, the worker was not perceived as a singular individual but rather as a member of a large population contributing to industrial production. Guidance interventions focused on identifying and assessing individual skills. They needed to be implemented quickly. The worker was not asked to participate in these activities. The advisor had an expert role and the worker was passive. In the second half of the 20th century, career education interventions developed, giving a more active role to an individual perceived as capable of learning how to manage his/her career. Nevertheless, guidance interventions remain strongly focused on the evaluations, the search for a suitable man-environment setup and the application of standardized educational programs. In the 21st century, the self-oriented person takes a central role, because s/he must become more involved and take charge of the construction of his/her professional life that mobilizes his/her identity. LD approaches offer a new epistemological framework for thinking about more effective guidance interventions for individuals who are more heavily engaged in a more uncertain job market. More complex devices capable of stimulating the reflection of individuals concerning the variety of contexts in which they evolve have been proposed by articulating methods generally used in isolation. These different approaches, along with the specific interviewing methods they propose, largely take into account the contexts of life and interactions that have a structuring role for identities and favor certain relationships with oneself, objects and certain social practices. Contemporary work contexts and new careers should lead to longer, more complex interventions that promote storytelling and dialogue, as well as experiences of social interaction (Maree, 2019).

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