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Life Design With Adults: Developmental Individualization Using Biographical Bricolage

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Introduction

The technological revolution of the 21st century, similar to the Industrial Revolution before it, has wrought dramatic changes in the occupational landscape and made it progressively more complex for individuals to choose occupations and adapt to work. The life course has become a "biography of choice" (Heinz, 2002) because adults must repeatedly explore, choose, and change roles and even life structures. In the field which was once simply vocational guidance, an additional paradigm emerged during the last decade to address the new sets of problems experienced by the members of society living in increasingly uncertain and complicated times. During the 20th century, vocational guidance practitioners could focus on helping adolescents in high school and emerging adults in college make "the" choice. The digital revolution and global economy have changed the contract between employers and employees so that school-leavers no longer choose a 30-year career. Today, adults repeatedly encounter the need to make new choices during a 40-year working life. Rather than offering permanent jobs and life-time employment, organizations now increasingly offer fixed-term projects and assignments. Before considering the two more recent paradigms for career services, I will consider briefly the foundational paradigm of vocational guidance.

Vocational Guidance

In response to the Industrial Revolution, society rearranged work into occupations. What had been the routine daily *chores* of farming became separated into distinct *jobs*. The first scientific paradigm for career intervention, known as vocational guidance, was devised by Parsons (1909) as a scientific approach to matching people to occupations and finding jobs in those occupations. Typically, counselors guided – that is, directed or advised – the lost by

recognizing who they resembled and then encouraging them to explore occupations in which they would interact with similar personality types. Thus, the paradigm for vocational guidance concentrated on the construct of *resemblance*. Counselors observed individuals and identified their standing on some enduring traits that differentiated among occupational groups. This practice relied on the stability of occupations. Its epistemology of *formism* (Pepper, 1942/1970) assumed that reality is stable and that observers can perceive the essential quality of individuals. With its root metaphor of similarity or type, formism attempts to answer the question, what is it like? by classifying objects in the world. Of course, for vocational guidance, the question became, who does the client resemble? The guidance paradigm was developed primarily by educators to assist students choose academic majors, make occupational choices, and transition from school to work. Originally, this activity was viewed as an event that took place late in adolescence, with the individual expecting to spent 30 years or more working in the same occupation, and possibly even for the same employer. The emblematic representation of occupational choice portrays a young person standing at a crossroads and trying to decide in which direction to move forward.

Career Education

During the 1950s the sense of occupational stability was shaken by social changes in the organization of society following World War II. Western societies experienced the growth of a middle class who lived in suburbs from which they commuted to work in hierarchical corporations. An individual who works in a bureaucratic hierarchy is rewarded by a regular salary and prospects of advancement during a life-time career. Thus career as a progressive trajectory through a corporation emerged as both a creation of, and value for, bureaucracies. Its emblematic representation is climbing a ladder. In response to this new social arrangement of work into *organizational careers*, guidance personnel quickly learned that vocational guidance was less effective for career planning with middle-class adults, because it mainly focused on the initial match of person to position, not a series of progressive positions sequenced along a career path. Assisting people to advance along career trajectories and climb hierarchical ladders of success required a second paradigm, which I call career development education or, for short, career education.

Career educators in the schools, and career coaches in organizations, noted that career development was a life-long process, in comparison with occupational choice which was a point-in-time event. Thus career education concentrated on how individuals cope with a series of social expectations or vocational development tasks about how to advance a career in an organization. Researchers identified the attitudes, beliefs, and competencies (the ABCs of career development) that agents may use to manage developmental tasks and shape their careers according to a grand narrative composed of five stages named growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. Career educators and coaches tried to make it easier to master these tasks by encouraging people to plan their futures and increase their readiness and resources for progressing up the career ladder. Practitioners taught students and coach clients in making decisions, seeking information, managing time, overcoming barriers, and solving problems.

The philosopher Pepper's (1942/1970) description of organismic epistemology supported the career development paradigm because it addressed the question, how does it develop?

Career development theory stresses an individual's inherent drive to grow toward wholeness through increasing complexity (development) and integration (health). In this paradigm, the self as agent is the source of his or her own development. As agents for their own lives, individuals must ready themselves for the next career stage and its vocational development tasks.

Need for a New Paradigm

So the field's first paradigm for career services was vocational guidance with youth entering the work world. Guidance concentrated on helping youths find their place in a stable world. The second paradigm for career services was career development with adults working in hierarchical organizations. Career development education and coaching concentrated on helping individuals climb the career ladder in hierarchical organizations. In the risk society (Beck, 1992) of the 21st century, practitioners no longer preach planfulness for a stable 30-year career but instead promote adaptability and preparedness for possibilities. Beck (1992) explained that in the 20th century, work was the "axis of living" (p. 139). Globalization of the economy and individualization of the life course has decentered work as the axis around which identity-construction rotates. No longer may individuals identify their place in the world with the work that they perform (Bauman, 1998). The occupational landscape of the 21st century has been referred to as VUCA – that is, volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous With the flattening of hierarchical corporations and the "dejobbing" of employment (Bridges, 1995), occupational careers have become fragmented by multiple transitions and numerous positions characterized as temporary, contingent, contract, adjunct, or part-time. The 30-year trajectory of a corporate career has become outmoded. People now change jobs about every 5 years according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2004; Mullins, 2009).

These changes present a new script for individuals in Western societies. Every society fosters adaptation by offering individuals "metanarratives" that confer social meaning. In these life-course scripts, a specific culture in a particular place tells the story of its members' typical life stages and role trajectories as well as the normative social time table for transitions (Macmillan, 2005). The family and social institutions serve as socialization agents in teaching young people these scripts. They act together to deliberately shape individuals to produce similarity among people in a society. The scripts for life are structured by the order and timing of multiple, interlocking social roles over the life span. In Western societies, the normative sequence is school, first job, apartment, marriage, and then children.

During the first half of the 20th century, Western societies increased standardization in role sequences and transition timing by expanding state activities and institutionalizing social life. Sociologist have called this standardization the *first demographic transition* (Lesthaeghe, 2010). In most Western societies, by 1960 a large majority of individuals uniformly followed the scripted order and timetable of events in the transition to adulthood. Unwillingness or inability to adhere to norms led to negative social consequences.

Tightening the sequence and increasing pressure to adhere to it brought the life-course timing of males and females closer together, as well as that of different socioeconomic groups. Of course, there remained broader patterns of stratification, inequality, and differentiation by gender, ethnicity, race, and social class. Yet, at midcentury, Erik Erikson (1950) could delineate the life-course script in his famous eight stages of life. In the vocational domain, Donald Super (1957) adapted the life-course stages first articulated by Charlotte Buhler (1933) into his model

of five career stages, each with three substages. As noted previously, this developmental paradigm coincided with the emergence of organizational careers and gave them a formal structure that career educators and coaches could use in their interventions.

Within each stage was a patterning of social roles that Super (1984) later portrayed in his life-career rainbow: child, student, leisurite, citizen, worker, homemaker or parent. The core social roles, according to Adler (1931), were work, friends, and love. From this perspective, which has been shared by the majority of citizens in Western societies, the deep meaning of life could be created in work, community, and marriage. Until the early 1970s, society forcefully endorsed these core roles, with normative pressure regarding their sequence and timing. The institutionalized life course had been sustained by industrial jobs and corporate careers that imposed strong discipline on the order and timing of life events. After 7 decades of increasing standardization, there came in the 1980s a deregulation of life paths and increasing pluralization of both occupational and family trajectories. For example, in 1991, IBM broke their loyalty contract by ending their lifetime employment policy (Hoerr, 1993).

During the 1970s and 1980s, new options led many people to reconsider the social script and ease normative pressure around role sequences and timing. Opportunities were narrowing, and the gap between aspirations and possibilities was widening, leaving many people anxious, uncertain, and confused. What had been viewed as new options, they then reinterpreted as disorderly sequences and timing caused by economic changes. This made the transition to adulthood more difficult (Grubb, 2002), especially for individuals who aspired to having an organizational career. The notion during the 20th century was that men had careers, while women had working lives. In the 21st century both men and women have working lives because the organizational career is dead (Hall, 1996).

While the traditional script of the 20th-century life course was loosening, the new rules were not yet clear (Herzenberg, Alic, & Wial, 1998). Today, they seem quite clear. For example, there is widespread agreement that the transition to adulthood has become later, protracted, and complex (Billari & Liefbroer, 2010). The trend toward greater complexity and diversity of life paths caused a shift from standardized, institutionalized life-course patterns to individualized biographies. According to Leccardi (2005), "Today, the biographical narrative seems to have lost its anchorage in this form of institutionalization of the life course, and the dimension of continuity associated with it" (p. 124). This trend has been characterized as individualization replacing institutionalization. Giddens (1991) suggested that this "detraditionalization" replaces tradition by demanding that individuals engage in reflexivity and meaning making, as they deliberate self-consciously on choices and actions. Some observers such as Mills (2007) regard individualization as the core characteristic of posttraditional society. Individualization denotes the societal transformation of social institutions that changes the relationship of individuals to institutions from dependency to self-reliance. Without strong institutional holding environments, individuals must organize their own lives. Rather than standardized life courses, individuals produce their own unique trajectories. Instead of moving through an orderly sequence of career stages in one organization, they must splice together a patchwork of short-term projects and assignments with different employers into a career story with continuity and coherence. It could be said that modernity made individuals by providing identities, whereas postmodernity requires people to construct themselves by shaping their own identities.

This individualization of risk shifts responsibility from social structures to the individual. The eminent sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2000) refers to this as "life in fragments" in a "liquid society" where individuals must live without a guidebook. People still need to organize

their lives, but planning no longer works because they lack clear coordinates for existence. Smith (1999) wrote that in the 20th century, people could chose

> their destinations early and travel toward them in a straight line toward successful career, good reputation, and happy family. Each life has a sense-making story that is part of a world that is orderly, determined, and predictable. Imposed norms are to be obeyed. Today process of self-constitution has no visible end, not even a stable direction. (Smith, 1999, p. 150).

In the 21st century, it has become quite difficult to envision and plan one's life in terms of a path through a fixed landscape. The 20th-century task of finding out where you fit in society has become a task of making yourself. This self-construction requires that young people, with less external guidance, prepare for life based on decisions about purpose and values. They must face the tasks of self-construction by deliberating autonomously on their interests, goals, and responsibilities. Because individuals lack a stable framework within which to deliberate, they may benefit from the collaboration of counselors who make them aware of alternative strategies and techniques for organizing their lives and work. Accordingly, the work of the counselor requires a third paradigm for career services, one that comprehends the occupational landscape of the 21st century and addresses the needs of adults who must make frequent transitions between jobs, occupations, and organizations. A contextualist paradigm that addresses these needs has its roots in the epistemology of social constructionism (Altman, Blank, & Germer, 1986).

Social Constructionism

As globalization progressed, the postmodern philosophy of social constructionism grew in popularity among social scientists, including career counselors, who have increasingly turned to narrative psychology. From the perspective of social constructionism, career no longer resides in the company; it lives within the narrative or story that people tell about their working lives and the social spaces that they occupy. Individuals author a story about themselves as occupational actors and vocational agents. A new approach to narrative career counseling – namely, life design (Savickas et al., 2009) provides a career service that assists clients to concentrate attention on the stories they are living and their wishes for the future. To help clients design a life, counselors focus reflection on identity themes and then extend them into the future. Counselors attend to uniqueness and emotion, not just simply the similarity of guidance and rationality of development. Attention to emotion is central to counseling, and of course career counseling in a risk society.

The epistemology of life design according to Pepper's (1942/1970) description is contextualism. The contextual world view defines reality as an ongoing and dynamic event. The individual is seen as constantly changing – especially through interaction – and action itself is conceptualized as behavior infused with meaning. Contextualist counselors make distinctions, they do not make classifications. Formism such as Holland's realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional (RIASEC) abstract types removes the context, whereas contextualism insists on the particulars of context. (Super & Harkness, 2003). According to Pepper (1942/1970), contextualism attempts to answer the question, how does it happen? The root metaphor is an act in context. And its truth criterion is a pragmatic "successful working" (Pepper, 1942/1970, p. 232).

Thus the third paradigm is about uniqueness, not resemblance or paths. It is about individuality not individual differences or stages. Vocational guidance rested on measuring individual differences to objectify clients as scores on variables – a very useful process for assessing whom a client resembles. However, guidance counselors rarely attempted to reassemble the extracted variables back together into whole persons. They forfeited attention to the individual participants as unique composites of social and psychological characteristics in favor of an almost exclusive regard for the variables. To advance career intervention for the 21st century, counselors need to understand persons, not differences between people, especially in assisting adults to make work-role transitions. Individual difference variables are differences not persons (Lamiell, 2003).

Distinctiveness of the individual, not differences or development, has become the quest of the third paradigm for career services. As the form of work changes from stability to mobility, to reflect the labor needs of postcorporate societies, so too must the form of career intervention change. The paradigms of guiding and preparing now must be supplemented with a new paradigm that fully addresses the life design needs of workers in information societies that have destandardized the life course (Duarte, 2009; Macmillan, 2005).

The work of guidance was to think in types, to make diagnoses. The work of counseling is to avoid types. Counseling focuses on uniqueness and helps clients to come to grips with how they feel about things as they face them. The "individualization of the life course" (Beck, 2002) calls for a science of intervention that deals with making a self, shaping an identity, constructing a career, and designing a life. With the shift in responsibility for career from institutions to individuals, people must "get a life" (Habermas & Bluck, 2000) and bridge transitions in that life by using biographicity or biographical learning (Alheit, 1995) and identity work (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Leccardi (2005) concludes that "biographical subjectivitization" (p. 126) means that individuals must assume greater responsibility for making their own choices and working out projects, and these projects are not long-term because fluidity is more common than fixity. The increased responsibility to decide comes at a time when the life-course reference points have dissolved. The uncertainty and temporality of the risk society leaves adults looking inward for reference points because in this liquid societies the only certainty is within self.

To address the needs of adults living in risk societies, career counselors and researchers have moved to the third paradigm (Savickas, 2012). This pattern for practice moves away from quantitative methods to measure individual differences, to embrace qualitative methods with which to study the experience of individuals in cultural context. Study of the "person as a whole" –what Henry Murray (1938) termed "personology" – cannot be done well with reductionist techniques (Valsiner, 2009, p. 13). This explains the growing importance of understanding individual persons, not parts, as they function in particular contexts. Taking an idiographic perspective with its qualitative methods leads to an appreciation for the structure and process of individual self-construction and social co-construction. It even prioritizes the use of individual case studies for generalization to a phenomenon as a whole and for training counseling interns.

Instead of making long-term plans for one's life, Leccardi's (2005) research suggests that now young adults form guidelines that give a compass for action. The guidelines should provide an "existential direction" (p. 130) and orientation for decision making that people may use as they repeatedly select short-term projects. This strategy of guidelines may be referred to as *developmental individualization*, which Schwartz, Côté, and Arnett (2005) defined as pursuing a life course "based on extensive deliberations of the alternatives and opportunities available – given the decline of traditional social markers and of economic barriers involving gender,

ethnicity, and social class – in pursuit of stimulating and liberating possibilities" (Schwartz et al., 2005, p. 204). The alternative is a passive approach in which the circumstances and impulses shape the life course. This passive pathway of *default individualization* involves little agentic investment in preparing to make important decisions and pursuing options that lead to self-improvement. Developmental individualization may be fostered by career interventions that concentrate on life-course transitions, viewing them as opportunities for individuals to actively shape their biographies by defining what comes next (Shanahan, 2000) based on their existential direction and guidelines. A new paradigm called life design provides a model and methods for just such a career intervention.

Life Design: A Paradigm for Career Intervention

The intervention of life design helps people to cope with the uncertainty of life-course transitions by constructing a biographical narrative that contains intentions or guidelines with which to make choices. The life design paradigm for career counseling takes a broader perspective than the vocational guidance and career development paradigms. Its purview is the course and content of life structures designed and constructed by individual strategies and choices. During the course of their lives, individuals structure and restructure their pattern of life roles by changing the salience and prominence of certain roles in relation to other roles in the theaters of work, friendship, intimacy, leisure, and citizenship. At its fullest, life design prompts individuals to reflexively consider life-course strategies and structures as they envision and build a life arranged with viable and fulfilling roles that interact to produce well-being. When life design focuses narrowly on the work role, the intervention still may be called life design, because work is a part of life. However, with a narrow purview on career, applications of the life design paradigm have also been called *career style counseling* (Savickas, 1989), *narrative career counseling* (Cochran, 1997), *vocational designing* (European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counseling, http://www3.unil.ch/wpmu/esvdc/), *self-constructing* (Guichard, 2009), *career designing* (Pukelis, 2012), and *career constructing* (Maree, 2013). For my purposes, *life design* is the appropriate name, having been established after lengthy negotiations among colleagues from seven countries (Savickas et al., 2009).

Simply stated, the paradigm for life design structures interventions to (a) construct career through small stories, (b) deconstruct these stories and reconstruct them into an identity narrative or life portrait, and (c) co-construct intentions that lead to the next action episode in the real world (Savickas, 2013). Let us consider each element in turn, starting with construction of a career story.

Construction

When individuals are dislocated from their current stories, they begin narrative processing of their biographies (Heinz, 2002). Some individuals seek counseling to assist them in this identity work. With these clients, life design interventions begin by having them describe both (a) the incident that dislocates them from the current episode in their story and (b) their goals for

a new scenario that they want to co-construct with a counselor. Often, clients' opening statement includes the exact ending at which we will arrive. They will keep going in the existential direction in which they are already headed. Counseling will articulate explicitly the guidelines and intention they know implicitly. To do this, life design enhances narratability – that is, it increases clients' ability to tell their stories. Thus, the process of counseling helps clients to clarify what they already know and thereby enhances their ability to decide and act.

To help clients articulate their existential direction and form new intentions, life design follows the advice given by Wittgenstein (1953) on how to solve biographical problems: namely, rearranging or reconfiguring a client's past stories to meet present needs. The narrative shaping of transitional discontinuities in a career can be viewed as "bricolage," which means constructing something new with whatever is at hand. The process involves the "decomposition of existing identities into their constituent components and their recombination into a new identity" (Carruthers & Uzzi, 2000, p. 486). These source materials from the text of one's own life, or sources of the self (Taylor, 1992), are old stories that are generalizable to the new problem and may be used to resolve it. Through biographical bricolage (Savickas, 2000), clients engage in a dialogue with the sources of their own self as they rearrange them to address the choices to be made. In due course, they impose a new organization on the base materials to form a narrative that both fits and shapes the project of making new choices and taking action. Through this process, bricoleurs integrate their past stories with new psychosocial situations to form a narrative identity that bridges the discontinuity and fits the new situation.

To prompt biographical bricolage, counselors ask clients to narrate micronarratives, or tell small stories about how they have made their self, shaped their identity, and constructed their career. Life design assumes that nothing can be created from nothing. So counselors inquire about the cultural plots and metaphors a client has used to articulate and illuminate her or his most profound concerns and fundamental truths. In general, individuals retrieve and repeat possibilities of action from communal history as sources of the self. To mold themselves and hold themselves, individuals select base materials from the range of meanings made accessible by their culture. But which plots, metaphors, meanings, and action possibilities did they select as sources for self-construction?

The genius of the counselor is in asking questions, not in finding answers. To elicit a client's sources of self, narrative counselors use questions to prompt clients to narrate their fundamental stories. Telling their stories focuses clients' self-awareness, and hearing their stories invites reflection on what matters most. Life design counseling theory (Savickas, 2011) recommends five simple questions to elicit stories about sources of the self. The questions inquire about their role models, magazines or television shows they read or watch, favorite book or movie, a motto, and early recollections. These story-crafting questions represent the scaffolding for self-assembly and reassembly. They prompt concrete examples of abstract claims about life and provide a reference background or meaning making with which to remake meaning to navigate transitions and troubles. The role models reveal self-conceptions and blueprints for self-construction, the magazines and television shows reveal manifest interests, the favorite story from a book or movies suggests a possible script for the next chapter in life, the proverb offers advice to self on making the transition, and early recollections highlight the perspective the client takes on bridging the discontinuity. The perspective may be simply the standpoint from which they view their current problem. However, more often, it will be a view of the present situation that has reactivated an unresolved experience from the past. That past is not just behind us, it also goes ahead of us as a presupposition, preoccupation, or perspective. For most of us, the preoccupation will lead to an occupation.

Deconstruction

Counseling involves clients in a quest for a different perspective on their lives. Often it involves a poignant process of examining and deconstructing defenses and safeguarding mechanisms they erected while growing up. Thus, counselors listen to client source stories to identify dominating expectations or insidious ideas that suppress more life-enhancing alternatives. Counselors must deconstruct or disrupt what clients take for granted by taking apart these self-limiting ideas, confining roles, and cultural barriers. In particular, counselors should be sensitive to axioms of meaning and ideological biases regarding gender, race, and social status. When stories require deconstruction, counselors may discuss with clients what a story assumes, overlooks, omits, forgets, or inadequately addresses. Having listened closely to how a client constructs her or his career story, and maybe deconstructing some of its ideas and incidents, the time comes to reconstruct the small stories into a large story or autobiography.

Reconstruction

Occupational transitions, developmental tasks, and work traumas require clients to revise their understanding – and understanding is the goal of life design, not explanation, which is the goal of vocational guidance. To foster deeper understanding, counselors assist clients to reconstruct a "life portrait" that cumulates the insights garnered from the constructs the clients used to tell stories about sources of the self. Narrative processing gathers the constructs from the microstories and crafts them together into one tapestry to narrate a unified sense of individuality. Integration of small stories about the self in social situations reconstructs a large story or macronarrative – that is, an identity narrative. Career counseling consists of helping clients to gradually rearrange their identity narrative by selectively and creatively reinterpreting the past to suit future aspirations. They reassemble or re-member preexisting elements in new combinations that are more useful. The emerging macronarrative or life portrait imposes order by highlighting strands of continuity and patterns of meaning that lead to renewed purpose in a changed world. The portrait articulates the client's existential direction and provides a guide in forming new intentions. Thematic continuities offer both fidelity and flexibility in pointing a way forward that maintains continuity yet at the same time alters the course. In short, life portraits are portrayals of personhood that are incomplete yet contain larger meanings relevant to questions asked by client. Remember in this reconstruction, or narrative bricolage, the client is the architect whom the counselor serves as carpenter. As Wittgenstein (1953) stated, problems are often solved by rearranging what a client already knows, rather than by giving new information. For many clients, a transition is bridged by a new perspective and truths, not new knowledge and facts.

Co-construction

Having reconstructed an identity narrative from the client's micronarratives, the counselor then presents to the client a draft of her or his life portrait. A first goal in narrating the life portrait to clients is to have them consider the macronarrative reconstructed by the counselor. In this way,

counselors offer themselves to clients as a medium for transforming stories into meaning. The portrait presented by the counselor should not be a surprise, like an interpretation, just the next step in the story of the life. It should provide a framework that organizes a client's energies and promotes formation of intention. This portraiture is more than an art of resemblance like that of vocational guidance, rather it presents an opportunity to explore emotion and inner thought. It should focus autobiographical reasoning on the change and choices being confronted.

Reflecting on the life portrait typically leads to the client editing the identity narrative. However, revising the macronarrative involves more than just giving accurate voice to the client's life story. The revision involves amendments that correct mistakes, adjustments that come to terms with old conflicts and settle accounts, and alterations that enhance self-esteem and support a more optimistic view of life. Clients need to modify the portrait to make it more livable and then extend it into the future. Revision should also help clients to amplify the career theme in order to better direct, regulate, and sustain their actions as they cope with their current concerns, challenges, and choices.

The co-constructed identity narrative should become a portrayal of personhood that relates clearly to the concerns and questions that the client brought to counseling. That is why they came to counseling. Client and counselor join together to candidly craft a move in meaning that produces a unifying message that signals and compels a choice. The co-construction of a revised life portrait seeks to incorporate the current dislocation in a way that clarifies priorities, mobilizes central tendencies, and increases the possibility of transformation and development. This occurs as clients access different meanings and understandings that open new possibilities and restart stalled initiatives. With new language, fresh perspectives, and expanded vistas, clients may reorganize their meaning system and clarify what is at stake in the next episode of their career story. This self-clarity enables clients to make their intentions more apparent to themselves and their counselors. With this new found clarity, clients may envision the next scene, form intentions, and begin to act. A revised identity narrative, with stabilized new meanings, enables individuals to meet the uncertainties of transition with comforts recalled from the past. Then with this new narrative, clients take action to make their lives happen. As clients go further and deeper into the world, their actions answer the questions brought to counseling. The actions produce further self-making, identity shaping, and career constructing. Ideally, the actions, and interactions with audiences for the new story, ease the life-course transition and insure success and satisfaction. A case study in life design may help readers better understand the model and methods used to help clients who have experiences a succession of work projects to shape an individualized life course that is meaningful journey rather that a patchwork career.

Case Study

The client was a 29-year-old White women who was currently employed as a high school teacher of English and French. When the counselor asked how he could be useful, she replied, "Help me sort out all of the things I've got going right now – job possibilities, making decisions, focusing." The client explained that she had just ended a 3-year romantic relationship because her partner did not want to have a child. She believed it was time to reorganize her own life, beginning with revitalizing her career, moving to a new town, and then forming a new intimate relationship. In sum she said, "I have to get out of here." Upon further questioning about

renewing her career, the client explained that she had to choose among four options: continuing her teaching contract, applying for a teaching position in Europe, taking a marketing job with a former employer, or beginning a doctoral program in education. She reported that she had begun college for 2 years as an international relations major because she said her high school history teacher had "opened up the world" and inspired her love of traveling and teaching. After observing that her peers who graduated with majors in international relations were not getting jobs, she switched majors to communication and received a degree in public relations, along with a teaching certificate. She quickly secured a job in the advertising department of a local company. Her employer then encouraged her to apply for a scholarship to study multicultural education in Australia. She won a scholarship and after earning a degree she returned to the United States and worked as an advertising copy writer. After 18 months she moved to London to teach American literature. A year later, she returned home to begin her current teaching position in which she also directs the drama program, supervises the speech club, and advises the student yearbook staff. During evenings for the last 3 years she had earned a master's degree in cultural foundations of education, with an emphasis on multicultural education. She wrote her thesis on White racial identity.

When asked to evaluate her four options, she said: "I like school. I like being in the classroom. I like teaching. I like learning. I am thinking about the doctoral program in cultural foundations. They have suggested a teaching fellowship which is very appealing, but I don't want to get into the wrong thing and hate it. For some reason, I am putting the brakes on that. I think that I would enjoy training, diversity training, and communications training. Intercultural communication would be my first choice of a doctoral program. I could easily do marketing. Millions of people have told me to do sales, but I do not see myself doing that. Nevertheless, money is becoming more important to me. I have been to three other career counselors, each of whom failed to help me make a choice. They all told me that I have strong and equal interests in Enterprising, Artistic, and Social occupations. This only confused me more."

To co-construct a life portrait with her, I conducted the standard Career Construction Interview (Savickas, 2011) by asking about role models, magazines, favorite story, motto, and early recollections. These questions aim to prompt reflection about self-construction and the reflexivity needed to form new intentions for the next episode in life. In naming role models while growing up, she began with her much older brother whom she described as extroverted, fun, someone who could talk with anyone, very gregarious, and social. He hitchhiked around the world. Her second role model was the leading character on the television show *Murphy Brown* because she was funny and kicked butt. Her third role model was Princess Diana. The client recalled that she liked dressing up and still follows the Royal Family. Her favorite magazines were *Self* because of the articles about women's issues, the *New Yorker* for book and theater reviews, and a professional magazine named *Teacher*. Her favorite story currently is the book *All Creatures Great and Small* by James Herriot (1972). She recounted the story about "brave people who are capable of coping with hardships, often in unconventional ways. They face life's ups and downs with both humor and courage. I admire the fiercely independent characters and appreciate the comedy and pathos of their lives. They use humor to deal with conflicts. Also, I love the opening poem."

All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

Her favorite saying was "A closed mind is a beautiful thing to waste." She explained its meaning by saying that "I get really frustrated with people who cannot open up their minds to see the value of something different than they have always seen. It's hard with high school students."

She reported four early recollections (ERs), and subsequently gave each a headline.

First ER: "I remember when my Dad got our dog Molly. My dad brought her home from the fire station. She could fit in your hand. I remember he sat her on the kitchen floor. I just remember being happy." Headline = "Abandoned Pup Produces Smiles."

Second ER = "I remember my Dad lying in the coffin. I was 5 years old. It is vivid. I don't know if I felt anything. Well, my Dad was an alcoholic and I knew it at pretty young age. I remember being almost angry, I was crying. And I was thinking 'He was drunk.' So I don't know if I felt anything when I looked at him but I remember seeing my Mom and that … I knew she was unhappy. She was sitting in a chair by herself. He had fallen asleep at the wheel. In my mind, I was positive he was drunk. I must have said something like 'Dad as drunk again.' And my brother backhanded me." Headline: "Mouthy Little Brat Calls It As She Sees It."

Third ER: "I was in the play *The King and I* when I was kid. That was very fun. The drama director let everybody in the cast have their little brothers and sisters in the play. She dressed us all up and painted our faces, gave use slanted eyes." Headline = "I Make My Debut."

Fourth ER: "My mom teaching me to read." Headline = "A Golden Moment."

The Career Construction Interview ended with me saying, "The time is right for you to move and move gracefully, not to move randomly. Some of the moves in the past have been more like adventures – sort of like your brother had. Now it is time to integrate those threads into a tapestry. Maybe it will not be one thing. It has to be complex, it has to be dramatic, and it must make you laugh. In leaving, she said "That's for sure."

Life Portrait

Before seeing her for a second session, I reconstructed a life portrait for her consideration. We used the following portrait to begin co-construction of an identity narrative and career intentions.

> Let's start by saying you are still that mouthy little brat who speaks the truth. One of your self-construction models was Murphy Brown, similar to her, you are a spunky lady who tells it like it is. Similar to a second model, you are gregarious, social, and fun. And of course, you like to dress up. From your favorite magazines, we see that your manifest interests are social (e.g., teaching) and artistic (e.g. book and theater review) – as you already know from previous counselors. In the social and artistic theaters of life, you want to enact the script of working with all things great and small. You know that people are capable of coping with hardships bravely. You want to help people become open-minded and develop the courage to face life's ups and downs, and you wish to teach them this using humor. Like the lead character in your favorite story, you are not afraid to be unpopular with those who you seek to help by telling them necessary truths that they may not want to hear. In your advice to yourself, you dedicate yourself to opening closed minds. Your quest is to speak the truth in a way that can open closed minds. You have done it for yourself by traveling the world and learning about different cultures. Now you want to do it for others by teaching

> multiculturalism. But maybe not to high school students. Rather your intended audience is college students who you wish to teach about social justice, as well as organizations where you can offer diversity training. You seem to gravitate toward getting a doctorate, maybe so you have the credentials to become a university professor and an organizational consultant. You are too artistic to keep teaching in high school, and you already know that. You can do sales and marketing and advertising. They can readily achieve your financial goals yet they do not allow you to make a social contribution by speaking the truth. You hope your new position will involve, or at least allow for, travel around the world. And you do not want to go alone. You want to share a committed relationship and have children. So here sits a woman who wants to open minds but not where she is right now. Where will she do it next, and how will she do it?

At the end of the second session, I asked her if she had achieved the goals she set for counseling. The client said, "Yes, I have sorted things out and [am] ready to leave my job and begin a doctoral program."

In many ways, the client had tipped her hand that she wanted to pursue a doctorate in multiculturalism. Co-constructing her life portrait as a "Truth Teller" affirmed and validated her implicit intention. She went on to earn a doctorate in multicultural education, take a position as a university professor of multicultural studies, and serve as a consultant to large multinational corporations for whom she travels the world to present diversity training workshops for executives. For now, she is happy and looking forward to her next life-course transitions, which she hopes will involve marriage and children. She remains confident because she knows where she is going and can rely on her existential direction as a guide in making smart choices to continue the journey.

Conclusion

As the form of work changes from stability to mobility to reflect the labor needs of postcorporate societies, so too must the form of career intervention change. The paradigms of guiding and preparing have been supplemented with a new paradigm that fully addresses the life design needs of adults in information societies that have destandardized the life course. To address the needs of adults living in risk societies, career counselors and researchers have embraced qualitative methods with which to study the experience of individuals in cultural context. A new paradigm called life design provides a model and methods for career interventions that foster developmental individualization. Life design concentrates on life-course transitions, viewing them as opportunities for individuals to actively shape their biographies by defining what comes next, based on their existential direction and guidelines. Through biographical bricolage (Savickas, 2000), clients engage in a dialogue with the sources of their own self as they rearrange them to address the choices to be made. In due course, they impose a new organization on the base materials to form a narrative that both fits and shapes the project of making new choices and taking action. They will repeat this process each time that they encounter a life-course discontinuity.

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