CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEXT

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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