Chapter 6
Processes of Identity Construction in Liquid Modernity: Actions, Emotions, Identifications, and Interpretations

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The last three decades have witnessed major economic and cultural globalization brought about by the development of information technologies and transportation. This process has had major repercussions, not only on many aspects of individual daily lives in the Western societies, but also—more fundamentally—both on their "assumptive form world" (to use the concept created by Cantril in (1950) and on the way individuals can picture their further life-course. Bauman (2000) forged the concept of "liquid modernity" to summarize these deep transformations. During these last 30 years, we moved from a solid modernity to a liquid one: modernity where institutions, organizations, and systems of beliefs do not have time to solidify.

In the first part of this chapter, we intend to discuss one consequence of liquid modernity, that is, that individuals must now cope more frequently with career and personal issues that differ from those they faced within the solid modernity context. What used to be career development issues are now transformed into questions about the job pathways individuals need to construct and integrate in lives that are meaningful to them. These questions about occupational pathways arise in a context where life courses appear to be more uncertain, featuring many more breaks than previously, and where life meaning must be built on multiple changes, including psychological ones, body ones, material ones, shifts in the interactions with others, in emotional states, in health and life conditions, in habits, in values, and in life roles.

In such a liquid context, career counsellors can less and less confine themselves to deal only with their clients' career management issues. More and more frequently, they have to tackle the "why" question (Arthur and Rousseau 1996); that is, to investigate the contribution of any commitment or change in work or in other life domains to the meaning their clients give their lives. In addition to these issues of

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"knowing what, who, and why" (Arthur & Rousseau), career counsellors need to consider with their clients the function of their doing—of their action—in these change or commitment processes. Thus, career counsellors become life designing counsellors (Savickas et al. 2009): the topic of the life designing factors and processes—notably via language and action as meaning makers—is now at the very heart of their interventions.

During recent years, plenty of research has dealt with this issue. Most of it is distinct from previous works as it considered human subjects from a new perspective: they were described as less "monolithic" than previously. Rather they were depicted as being able to be and act in quite different ways according to the contexts of interaction; they were also described as better able to reinterpret their previous experiences and narrate them to define future prospects that allowed them to give their current lives direction. The model "making oneself self" (*se faire soi*) (Guichard 2004, 2005, 2007), which is summarized in the second part of this chapter, outlines a synthesis of these contemporary analyses that can be used as a theoretical basis for counselling (Guichard 2008).

This model emphasizes two kinds of reflexivity, the tensions and modes of combinations of which are at the very heart of these self construction processes. One of them refers to identification process, which is a stabilizing factor. The other is an indefinite process of re-interpretation and of building potential future prospects on one's past and present experiences. As different examples stemming from recent research show that individuals appear to combine these two kinds of reflexivity in different ways in view of either sketching, defining, or specifying their future prospects (Bangali 2011; Bangali and Guichard 2012; Piraud 2009).

Nevertheless, the model *making oneself self* concentrates mainly on an understanding of the cognitive processes of meaning-making via language. However, during counselling interventions, the issue of action also arises: how does action—the implementation of self—also contribute to the construction of self? Other constructivist approaches, notably contextual action theory (Domene et al. this volume; Valach et al. this volume; Young and Domene 2011; Young et al. 2002; Young et al. 2011) stresses that it is also "in acting that we construct our lives, including our career life" (Young and Domene 2011, p. 30). Considering action as a multilevel system directed by co-constructed (joint) goals, this theory allows the processes of making a sense of self as an individual construes through action, projects, and career, to be approached in a way complementary to the cognitive reflexivity processes described by Guichard (2004, 2005).

Third part of this chapter aims to establish a link between these two perspectives, in showing how the two reflexivity processes can be understood through the different levels of action. Such connection aims eventually to support new kinds of counselling interventions. If, indeed, the core issue of contemporary career counselling is to help "individuals best design their own lives in the human society, in which they live" (Savickas et al. 2009, p. 4) and help them to do it in an active way, then career counselling interventions need to rely on the two means of construction of self: language and action.

Characteristics of Today's Affluent Societies and Their Consequences on the Conception of the Human Subject

Liquid Societies and Flexible Organizations

Most sociological analyses converge (to name an outstanding example, Giddens 1991) on the fact that today's affluent societies are more fluid, varied, and complex than they were only half a century ago. Within these societies, various cultural models, some of which are dominant, co-exist. Different lifestyles are available, some of which are more valued than others. Social norms about the "right" way to direct one's life are more open to challenge than before. Thus, our societies no longer provide their members with a set of established and indisputable referents allowing them to know, once for all, how to direct their lives.

At the same time, our societies are centered on work. Most individuals can only make a living by exchanging their work for remuneration. As job security has decreased, finding and retaining employment is a major concern for a large part of the population. Therefore, where work and employment intersect, career plays a central role in many people's lives (Clot 1999). In addition, we carry out this work in increasingly complex organizations. These circumstances require the ability to adapt to roles, develop skills, and construct representations about ourselves, such as self-efficacy beliefs or interests. Contemporary work organizations also differ notably from earlier organizations (Askenazy and Caroli 2010; Ashkenas et al. 1995) insofar as they tend to entrust small teams, formed for the duration of a specific assignment, with the responsibility for production. These teams must organize themselves to achieve assigned goals. The organizations offer less predefined career perspectives. They call on peripheral workers employed for a limited period of time when required by short-term economical interests. In relation to these new forms of work organization, the *psychological dimension* of the employment contract has changed (Rousseau 1995; Sels et al. 2004). Companies are no longer expected to secure their employees' future within the organization. Reciprocally, employees are not expected to plan their future within the company. Careers are now described as *protean* or *boundaryless* (Arthur and Rousseau 1996; Hall 1976, 2002). This means that careers are mainly based on individual decisions, particularly, on the capacities of individuals to invest their capital of skills judiciously, according to the opportunities they can identify. To summarize, both the current work organization and the more general context of our societies offer individuals less predefined frameworks that could provide them with established life bearings. This is precisely what Bauman (2000, 2007) describes when he defines "liquid modernity" as a major feature of our societies:

> Bauman sees liquid modernity not so much as a world of egocentric individuals who shape their lives as personal projects made through their own imaginings about the possibilities that the world out there has to offer, but one in which men and women are reflective moral agents who leave in an uncertain world which means that they are forced in the quotidian of their day-to-day lives to contemplate their existential insecurities. (Blackshaw 2007, p. 10)

These societal and organizational changes have had two major consequences with regards to vocational development interventions.

A Transformation of the Vocational Development Issues Faced by People

The first consequence is that the vocational development issues people face have become more complex, vaster, and deeper than previously. They are more complex because what was a vocational choice at the beginning of the 20th century, and had become a career development issue in the 1950s, now is described as individuals' capacity to invest their competencies in work assignments that they consider beneficial to themselves (Arthur 1994; Arthur and Rousseau 1996).

Vocational issues are also vaster as, on one hand, such work investments require people to be able to examine all aspects of their lives and assess the career capital (in terms of knowing how and knowing who) that they have constructed. On the other hand, to make up their minds, people also need to answer the question of *knowing why* (DeFillippi and Arthur 1996): this means they have to think about what makes their lives meaningful, determine their life priorities (priorities that will need to be redefined during the life-course) and the style of life that they yearn for.

Finally, these issues have become deeper. As already mentioned, today's flexible organizations and liquid societies do not provide people with indisputable life models. They have—at least partially—to decide these by themselves, though definitely as a result of interactions with others. They, therefore, have to determine for themselves the fundamental values and key elements that give their life meaning and direction. Dealing with these decisions is now a major developmental task of emerging adults. All these reasons lead to the assertion that vocational development has become a life-designing issue (Savickas et al. 2009).

A New Look at Human Development

The second consequence of the societal and organizational changes mentioned earlier is that social and human sciences have changed the way they conceptualize human development. There are indeed strong and converging indications that these new possibilities for action that are socially given to individuals have led social and human scientists to redefine the perspectives from which they study the development of human subjectivity. As Gergen (1991) wrote: "Postmodernism does not bring with it a new vocabulary for understanding ourselves, new traits or characteristics to be discovered or explored. Its impact is more apocalyptic than that: the very concept of personal essences is thrown into doubt" (p. 7). Previous psychology literature indeed emphasized the stability and the uniqueness of the human subject. Gergen stressed it was based on a "rhetoric of autonomous and enduring dispositions" (1991, p. 45). Individuals were seen as people endowed with steady features

(such as personality traits, a certain IQ, some fundamental life values, etc.) and behaving in a similar manner—such as being an introvert—in different contexts. This research insisted on the role of past conditioning, interactions, and personal issues in current behaviors and representations. The explanations they offered were satisfactory in the context of the steady and homogeneous societies of the time.

In contrast, contemporary research underlines the plurality of individuals, their relative malleability, and their capacity to take a reflexive stance on their experiences, a capacity that endows them with self-determination ability. In addition, these approaches stress the major importance of ongoing interactions and dialogues in the construction of individual subjectivity. These models, which may be categorized under the generic terms of constructivist and constructionist (Hartung and Subich 2011; McMahon and Watson 2011; Young and Collin 2004), also put the emphasis on the future. Thus, they emphasize the symbolization or narrative power of individuals, a power that allows them to determine by themselves future perspectives that are not simple products of their past conditioning and challenges.

A Self Construction Model

More and more frequently, career counsellors refer to this new perspective on human construction as they design interventions to match the needs of the uncertain individuals living in liquid modernity. As Sugarman (2003) underlines (quoting Datan et al. 1987, p. 154), they place an emphasis on

> a more descriptive work, including a more systematic use of autobiography, storytelling and conversation, diaries, literature, clinical case histories, historical fiction, and the like, with a new emphasis upon the person's construction and reconstruction of the 'life story', rather than what might be considered a more objective account of what happened. (p. 103)

The *making oneself self* model (Collin and Guichard 2011; Guichard 2004, 2005, 2009; Guichard and Dumora 2008) is a synthesis of different approaches (sociological, cognitive, dynamic, semiotic, and so forth) to these phenomena of putting into perspective and narrating one's life; a synthesis that aims to provide a conceptual framework for the life designing counselling interventions.

This synthesis describes individuals in postmodern societies as plural beings who unify themselves by linking up their various life experiences from the perspective of some major future prospects that give their lives significance and meaning. Indeed, as already noted, in these societies, individuals interact and dialogue in settings that are not necessarily consonant with each other. They hold roles that vary from one setting to another, as they act and interact often in ways relatively specific to each of them. Individuals then develop a repertoire of more or less varied and heterogeneous experiences that lead them to construct diverse representations of themselves.

Individual Identity as a System of Subjective Identity Forms

To depict this plurality, the *making oneself self* model describes an individual identity as a dynamic system of subjective identity forms. The central concept is then that of subjective identity form (SIF) (Guichard 2004). This concept aims to describe a *self* that an individual constructs and performs, has constructed and performed, or expects to construct and perform in a certain setting.

A subjective identity form may be defined as a set of ways to be, act and interact in a certain setting, in connection with a certain view of oneself in this setting, of which the individual is more or less clearly aware. A SIF can be described, in a more detailed way, as a set: (1) of actions and interactions (that generally correspond to some scripts of action and relate back to knowledge, knowing-how, knowing how to be, or mindsets), (2) of ways to relate to the "objects" and to the other people (of ways to interact and dialogue with them), and (3) of ways to relate to oneself (that lead to the construction of self-observations generalizations, of self-efficacy believes, of a certain self-determination feeling, of a certain self-esteem, etc.) in the same setting.

Insofar as individuals generally interact in various settings that are not always consonant with each other, what is usually named an individual identity should better be described as a system of subjective identity forms. Some relate to present contexts of activities, others relate to past interactions and interlocutions that still play a role in the individual's current life, and still others to future expectations that allow the person to provide this system with a unity anchored in a certain future perspective.

Some descriptions borrowed from the scientific literature illustrate what may be the SIF system of an individual at a given period of his/her life. For example, in using some descriptions by Jellab (2001) of vocational high school students, the ideal-typical case of one of them may be outlined. Through the activities he engages in as a high-school student in electronics, this young man—born in France to an immigrant family—constructs and views himself in a certain high-school student SIF. This SIF corresponds to a "reflexive way to relate to knowledge." This means that this young man prefers reflection when he is confronted with practical exercises (to him, doing does not mean repeating an operation learned by heart, but understanding why this operation needs to be done this way on this occasion), that he puts himself more in abstract knowledge than in occupational knowing how, that he gets involved more in schoolwork than in workshop, and so forth. This high-school SIF of a student more interested in general knowledge corresponds to a certain view of oneself: this adolescent considers himself as "competent" ("good") in the abstract disciplines (notably math) he values (self-efficacy beliefs). More globally, he sees himself as a gifted and hard-working student (self-esteem), and thinks his school future depends on himself (self-determination) . In connection to this current SIF, this young man constructs a certain expected SIF: he imagines himself in the future as a college student in the domains of electronics or information processing.

Nevertheless, this young man's present life is not confined to such a student experience. One may imagine, for example, he works during weekends for a home computer assistance small enterprise. On the occasion of this activity, he performs and constructs a SIF different from the one related to his current school experience. In this setting, he indeed sees himself as able to diagnose a problem quickly and explain it easily to customers, and as knowing how to fix it. He has good relationships with almost all of the customers, and has the impression that a few of them would be happy to help him on some occasions, for example, find a practicum, a summer job, or get information on a course. During these activities, this young man acts and perceives himself in the following way: he constructs self-efficacy beliefs that differ from the ones he developed at school, he becomes aware of other social networks, and so forth. All these are the constituents of another SIF, which, in this example, is consonant with the high-school one.

At a given time in an individual's life, a certain SIF generally holds a more central place than others. This central SIF refers most often to a life domain—an activities domain (Almudever et al. 2007)—in which the person wants then to excel or to achieve a certain ideal. In adolescents and emerging adults, it is usually related to a certain expected SIF. For example, Piriou and Gadéa (1999) showed that French sociology students who succeeded in their studies pictured themselves in the SIF of a sociologist. They built a clear image of this figure, an image that matches the portrait depicted in the media and intellectual circles of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, that is, a great researcher leading rigorous studies based on a very well define conceptual apparatus and a person committed to protest actions in order to construct a fairer society. This ideal to be attained often refers back to some past experiences that played an important role in individuals' lives: experiences that brought them to construct some fundamental values (Schwartz 1992; Super et al. 1995) or life themes (Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie 1979; Savickas 2005, 2011). These values or life themes, integrated and reinterpreted within the frameworks of their current and expected experiences and activities, contribute to providing the individuals with a meaning. In the model proposed here, these past experiences leaving their marks on the present are named "past SIF."

In the preceding example of a vocational student who is more interested in abstract knowledge than in know-how, his high school student SIF appears to be central as it is related to major expectations. Indeed in connecting Jellab's (2001) observations and Zéroulou's (1988) research about school success in immigrant children, one may suppose that this young man constructed, during his childhood, a set of representations, scripts of actions, mindsets, and expectations that correspond to a past SIF which could be named "son of immigrants who were expecting social inclusion and a rise in social status for their children." Indeed, Zéroulou showed that migrant families whose children succeed at school tend to share some common features: parents have urban origins and were schooled when they were children, they expect social success via school work (and, more generally, they value well-conducted work), they show a strong interest in their children's school work and organize the best possible conditions to help them complete their home work, to which they pay careful attention. These are the expectations, views, and mindsets

this young man adopted. They still play an important role in his current life and help him to design it. They notably make him consider vocational high-school as "a new departure" (Jellab 2001) towards tertiary education.

The Dynamism of the Subjective Identity Forms System

The subjective identity forms system is not static. It changes according to the events that impinge on individuals' lives, in connection with the activities, interactions, and interlocutions in which they become involved. For example, a particular SIF—central at one time—may become peripheral at a later time, as it is observed, for example, in people who have devoted themselves to educating their children begin new activities—sometimes very different from the previous ones—when these children become adults. For example, Levinson and Levinson (1996) concluded that "as family became less central, the homemakers [in Levinson and Levinson research: women] turned mainly to occupation for new interests, activities, and sources of satisfaction" (p. 191). Levinson and Levinson observed three main patterns of changes: some women made occupation central, some others gave occupation a moderate but significant place in their lives, and a small group (about 20 %) expanded their leisure activities without pursuing an occupation. Some psychosocial transitions (Anderson et al. 2011; Parkes 1967) induce major modifications to an individual's SIF system. As is explained later, other transitions have a weaker impact; they result merely in a certain transformation of one or more SIF's.

A review of the psychology literature from the end of the 19th century to the present leads to postulate that the dynamism of the SIF system—therefore of self-construction—originates in the tensions and the diverse modes of combining two types of reflexivity that constitute the self. This literature shows two major currents which date back to James (1890) (and previously to René Descartes) for the first major current, and the other major current dates back to Peirce (as cited in Atkin 2010) and Cooley (1902) (and likely farther back to Giambattista Vico).

The first current emphasizes the dual process of relating from oneself to oneself, that is, the self being then conceived as a reflexivity I—me, to use James' terminology (1890). "I" synthesizes all his/her past and current experiences ("me") from the perspective of expectations about him/herself in the future linked to identifications with pictures of others, for example, role models, or to big ideals (Erikson 1959; Lacan 1977).

In contrast, the second current stresses a ternary relation to oneself on the occasion of intra or inter-personal dialogues. In these dialogues, the other is not an idealized mental image which fascinates the individual and according to which he/she dreams to become. Rather, it is another "I": a "you" who grants to the person a capacity (1) to distance him/herself from his/her past and current experiences, as well as from his/her crystallized future expectations, that are then considered as those of "he/she" and (2) to enter in a continuing process of self-interpretation, opening up to some potential future prospects.

Wiley (1994) tried to unify these two currents. He achieved it only in reducing the first one to the second. He asserted that a fundamental process emerges: a ternary reflexivity that individuals articulate in their minds where their own points of view of "I" with the system of the other "I" that form a human society. This ternary reflexivity—the one described notably by Mead (1934) in his model of generalized other—would lay the foundation of an infinite process of self-interpretation and self-development. Such a reducing is possible only if the other "I" is considered merely as one of the possible figure in a narration (one of these multiple "I" of the "dialogic self" described by Hermans and Kempen in 1993). But "I" may also apply to a certain figure which plays a specific role in the individual's mind: "I" refers then to a certain other that fascinates him/her and according to whose picture he/she dreams to design his/her life. It is very precisely this specificity of the identification processes—with the risks of alienation they encompass—that Malrieu (2003) showed in his analysis of the Waffen S.S. General Ohlendorf's biography narratives. Ohlendorf's identity, that is, his SIF system, was structured by the irremovable ideal to achieve being Hitler's most perfect follower, as he revealed it during the Nuremberg trial, where he was sentenced to death.

Ternary Reflexivity, Interpretation, and Construction of Potential Future Prospects

The ternary type of reflexivity is a "person dialogic interpretation" process. Anchored in semiotic processes, it refers to the concept of "person" as it was described by Peirce (as cited in Colapietro 1989) and developed by Jacques (1991). According to these two authors, the person is both supra-individual (or interpersonal) and intra-individual. It is a continued dialogic process that articulates the three positions of the "I," of the "you," and of the "he/she." Thus, each speech act (or speech turn) can take the form of either an "I" that tells "you," or of a "you" who answers "I," or of an "I" and "you" who refer to he/she. Each statement leads then to the production of a certain "interpretant," that is to say of a certain understanding of the statement, and not of an understanding of what this statement might definitively mean (Atkin 2010). Each interpretant is taken up again during the following speech act or speech turn, which leads to the production of a new interpretant. This type of reflexivity enables individuals to engage in an indefinite process of interpretations and re-interpretations of their past and present experiences that lead them to sketch out, and sometimes specify, new potential future prospects.

Thomas's case (Piraud 2009) illustrates this phenomenon of ternary reflexivity. Thomas was a senior high school sophomore in a science program who had entered amateur racing cyclist activities. For years, he trained while picturing himself in the future wearing the yellow jersey on the Tour de France podium. In reference to the model outlined here, one may assert that Thomas's identification with the character of the Tour of France winner, via a dual reflexivity process described, notably, by

Dumora (1990) as a "desire to be like," led Thomas to commit himself to intense physical activity to be prepared for the racing cyclist job.

At the beginning of his sequence of counselling which comprised six interviews lasting about 1 h each and spread throughout the course of a year, Thomas realized that, in spite of his considerable efforts, for example, that prevent him from going out with his buddies, he will never achieve his dream of wearing the yellow Tour de France jersey. At best, he will run in a professional team pack, which is a prospect he cannot accept. The first interview deals mainly with the issue of how to announce this conclusion to his trainer, who—Thomas said—considered him a little bit as his own son. Indeed, it seems that the trainer identified Thomas as the marvelous son—the Tour de France winner—he never had.

Over the course of counselling, Thomas produced a large series of interpretants—in this case of possible prospects—allowing him to order in various ways some events that characterized his past experiences: events he selected, weighted, and articulated in a specific way on each occasion. This resulted in the emergence and the consideration of possible expected subjective identity forms: professional soccer player? In the army? Sports coach? Sports physiotherapist? Dietitian? Eventually, 2 years after the first interview, Thomas underwent the tests for admission to the state police: a job that matches—according to Thomas's private view (Guichard 2007, 2011) of this job—his desire of order, his interest in sports activities, and his caring of others.

Dual Reflexivity as a Source of Stabilization of the Subjective Identity Forms System

The dialogic ternary reflexivity is the very principle of an indefinite construction process of potential future prospects. It is indefinite, insofar as each interpretant a person construes about his/her past and present life (i.e., each new future perspective from which he/she relates to them) can give way, at its turn, to the elaboration of a new interpretant. This new interpretant corresponds to the construction of a new potential future prospect leading the person to reorganize his/her past and present life experiences from this new direction. This phenomenon was especially prominent in Thomas's case (Piraud 2009) who, for about a year, was unable to stop this interpretative process and choose a certain future prospect which appeared to him as sufficiently desirable.

Nevertheless, it is easy to observe that most people make choices: they decide and stick to their decision; they strive to achieve a certain prospect. Multiple factors likely contribute to this stabilization and, notably, a concern to protect a current situation the individual does not consider as too bad in the life domains that matter to him/her. However, one of these factors seems to play a major stabilizing role. It is the dual reflexivity during which an individual constitutes him/herself as an object to him/herself, from the point of view of a certain ideal he/she wants to achieve (Foucault 1982a, b, 1983). During such a process, individuals define (and consecutively implement) some activities or behaviors in order to achieve a certain state of perfection in connection with the standards of this ideal. In adolescents or emerging adults

(but not only in them), this ideal generally corresponds to an expected SIF related to a certain character's image with whom they identify. This expected SIF may then play a decisive role in the organization of their subjective identity forms system.

This dual type of reflexivity seems to originate in the preverbal unification phenomenon of the human "I," that Jacques Lacan (1977) described with the concept of "mirror stage." This unification of oneself is based on an *expectation of being as this unified image of oneself* (which may be seen in a mirror). That is to say, to become as this eminently desirable image of him/herself that fascinates the individual who is then emerging as such. This mode of relating to oneself and to one's present and potential experiences involves identification with a certain internalized image and constitutes a certain crystallization of the self.

To illustrate this dual type of reflexivity, Dumora's (1990) observation may be mentioned: a junior high-school boy told her he "wanted to be like Zidane," the famous soccer player. This expectation allowed the teenager to see all his current activities from a certain perspective and give his various behaviors a certain direction and meaning. In the vocabulary used above, one can write that the image of Zidane this adolescent formed was an expected SIF that determined the organization of his SIF system: it was then structured from this major prospect perspective. Pouyaud (2008) described an analogous case: Igor, a vocational high-school student, organized his SIF system around a double central character: the amateur firefighter he was then, and the professional one he dreamt of becoming. All his experiences appeared to be "read" from this unique character's point of view that gave his past, present, and future life, a consistency and certain meaning.

Recall Thomas's case described above, in all probability, Thomas's mindset was the same before he realized the utmost sacrifices he would have to make in all his other life domains to fulfill his dream, for an unlikely result. Thomas's case also shows that it is not an easy thing to abandon such an identification. It is the reason why his first counselling interview—which was about an explicit question: how to tell my coach who sees me as his son that I want to give up cycling?—dealt implicitly with another issue, more fundamental to him: "what is it that I am telling myself?"

Expectations that play such a central role in individuals' lives generally do not die out when they are unfulfilled. Rather, they are taken back again and reinterpreted. They often continue to play a major role in individuals' interpretations of their current experiences and of some activities in which they are involved. This emerged, for example, in Piriou and Gadéa's (1999) observations. As already outlined, the participants were university students who studied sociology. Among them, those who obtained their Master's degrees used to saw themselves in the future in relation to the expected SIF of the "sociologist." However, there were (and still are) very few jobs available in this field. Therefore, almost all of them had to think about another career when they received their diploma (Master or PhD). Some of them then entered a career of youth worker or sociocultural activities coordinator. However, when questioned about the way they saw their jobs, these individuals often declared they performed it as "sociologists." They said, for example, they were more sensitive than other youth workers to the social conditions that could explain some behaviors in the populations of which they took care.

The Function of Action in the Construction of Self

As a constructivist approach, the model *making oneself self*, considers individuals from a "creative" perspective. As shown by previous examples, the two kinds of reflexivity are described as two dynamic sources of identity construction as they are partially involved in conflicts, discrepancies, experienced and felt incompatibilities in the life-course, in daily interactions, or when individuals face others and the environment.

This model's creative perspective refers to the individual's ability to find a balance between the stabilizing kind of reflexivity (dual) and the interpretative one (ternary). This balance aims to resolve the experienced conflicts, via a continuous process of forming these sets of self-presentations, representations, and ways of acting and interacting that comprises the SIF. SIFs are thus the emerging aspects of the construction of self that are contemplated during counselling. In this sense the SIFs—organized as a system—are the outcomes, the structured supports for the self, as they were constructed at a certain time and in a particular context.

As we have seen, this construction relies mainly on language as a medium of reflexivity. Nevertheless, any SIF also encompasses certain forms of action (as scripts, for example), or some ways to act in a specific setting. Therefore interaction also needs to be comprehended from the perspective of the behaviors, feelings, emotions, and physical repercussions it calls for. If it is quite easy to discern the dynamic role of the two reflexivity processes, and the structural side of the SIF's concept, it is less obvious to identify the more precise role of these last elements. Young et al. (2005) stated that the concept of action refers to different embedded levels spreading from internally directed behaviours to more socially constructed levels, such as projects and careers. Following this distinction, we'll approach the issue of the role of action in the construction of self while differentiating the ways these diverse levels of actions may support the reflexivity processes.

SIFs can be seen as contextualized implementations of self that, via their changes, make a person's identity story. This story, the life-course with its life or career themes, might be compared to an ongoing movie; that is, a projection of continuously revitalized SIFs directed by the reflexivity processes, with the help of the recording materials that are action and language. Capitalizing on the work of Vygotsky (1934/1986), who saw language as the primary psychological instrument of thought development, we can consider here action and language as the main instruments to record experience and construct a sense of self that allow self-realization.

A development of this movie metaphor permits the clarification of this point. Each of the elements detailed in the model *making oneself self* indeed appears as having a specific function in the production of such an "identity movie" (as construction of a "personal work to be shown").

"Direction" is the creative process. As mentioned above, two types of reflexivity, involving identifications and interlocutory dialogues, produce a continuous recycling of the SIFs. As in sustainable development, this reflexivity process aims at resolving conflicts. People recycle their SIFs that have undergone the test of experience, which either stabilizes them or makes them change.

SIFs are the outcomes of this direction. They are the developed pictures, the succession of which displays what is shown about self. They are continuously put through the trials of experience, of which they are also the outcomes. They are eventually what remain of the confrontation between self and experience, as they are sifted by the reflexivity processes. They are the results of "trials," in this term's alternative meaning, that is, (1) a process of testing by use of experience in view of establishing a certain proof, (2) an examination of evidence and a process of deliberation in order to issue a judgment, realize an effort or attempt, and (3) a state of pain or anguish. The SIF system is thus the "best" possible combination of self as it stems from an actual confrontation of self with experience, directed (set up, created) by reflexivity. Identity, as it appears through the SIF system, is therefore only a transient outcome of this direction.

No "direction" of self would occur if there was no instrument for recording the experience and editing it. The continuous process of self projection relies on psychological tools for marking experience and categorizing it in order to give it a meaning. Action can be seen as the main recording device and language the main editing one.

Action and Language as Instruments of Self's Direction

From a counselling intervention perspective, it is important to grasp how actions and language, as instruments, permit identity outcomes to be connected with identity processes. Constructivist counsellors rely on these two instruments when they support clients direct their life-designing processes. Therefore it is appropriate to specify how language and action function as instruments of the self's construction.

Action

The example of Thomas (reported above) permits an understanding of the role of action as an experience "recorder" (as does a movie camera). Involved in dual reflexivity processes that stabilized his system of subjective identity forms via a major identification with the figure of the Tour de France winner, he enacted daily a subjective identity form anchored in such identification, as many high-level athletes do. This means that he did not only consider his actions from this perspective, but also that he performed them as such. This allowed him to put up with the requirements and sufferings induced by training and helped him experience his body as the athlete one he expected to become. Thus he tried to strengthen this core SIF via action, and the sensations and emotions that stemmed from it, and keep alive this view of self. So, it is via sensations and emotions originating in action, that is, when the body braves the actual circumstances, that action plays its role of "video-recording" pictures that need to be edited.

Emotions are experience markers, in the sense that they cause an assessment of self: they put it through trials. In Thomas' case, actions allowed this core SIF to be put through trials according to the dual reflexivity's logic of achievement of the self. But, in Thomas' story, this core SIF progressively decayed. Again, action played a major role in this process. On the occasion of an injury or an illness or on the occasion of poor performances, the feeling to enact the "Tour de France" winner crumbled. The core SIF lost its efficacy when action no longer brought about the physical abilities required for a steady identification. Subsequently, emotions and sensations experienced in action did not strengthen the SIF, but put it into doubt and even challenged it. Once again emotions and sensations are markers of self that need to be edited, but this time according to the ternary reflexivity's logic of interpretation of the self.

Different types of actions and feelings should probably be differentiated. The joy felt when mounting the podium, the feeling of pride when one brandishes high in the air a cup with one's chest stuck out, the sensation of being worn out after intensive training, or the sharing of a meal with one's team mates to get over a defeat probably do not have the same impact on the construction of self, in an expected SIF of a Tour de France winner, as the felt joy when seeing a play or the felt fatigue after a run to catch a bus.

The potential link between an action and a SIF appears to be the product of the specific interaction between individual and context. It is linked with an action: a certain action which stirs the individual to a greater or lesser degree. But it also depends on the individual's capacity to consider this action from a perspective of self construction.

Levels of action, as differentiated by Young et al. (2005), certainly enrich the understanding of this identity dynamic. These levels of action (individual action, joint action, project, career, described by the internal processes, the social meaning and manifest action, and guided by action elements, functions, and goals) may be understood as fostering either a reinforcement or a re-interpretation of self, according to contexts and the current goals of these actions.

As already suggested, individuals are not committed to a process of self-construction by any experienced action. In our metaphor, only the marked actions (the recorded ones), which are then edited by language when it directs the production of self, are involved in an active way in the construction of SIFs.

Actions in which individuals become involved are the motive and goals that are related to some characteristics of the self that makes sense in a given context. Thus, Brunstein (1993) asserted that individuals seemed to commit themselves more to what he called their "personal goals" (as cited in Downie et al. 2006).

If the nature of the goal can play a role in an individual's involvement in his construction of self, the fact that SIF are organized into a system suggests that pondering the different personal goals could also imply the two types of reflexivity. For example, Boudrenghien et al. (2011) have investigated the involvement of college students in their studies. Referring to Carver and Scheier (1998), they differentiate the capacity to become involved in a goal according to its levels of abstraction and integration. According to the goal's level of abstraction, the authors differentiate

identity goals ("be goals") that aim at self-achievement as a person, from action and action goals ("do goals") that aim simply to achieve a certain type of action. The "be" and "do" goals are integrated and form a hierarchical system of goals. "Do goals" are at the lowest level of this hierarchy. They are sub-goals that are involved in the implementation of "be goals," which are at this hierarchy's highest level. The links between goals and sub-goals permit the description of each goal's level of integration. The more the attainment of a goal is perceived to be dependant on the joint attainment of many other goals, the higher is its level of integration. The higher a goal is integrated, the more individuals tend to perceive it as important and become involved in its achievement. "Do goals," which may be compared to the individual action level in Young's model (Young et al. 2005), serve as supports for the achievement of "be goals," which may be compared to the levels of joint actions, project, and career, as soon as they are integrated; that is, in Young's model, as soon as individual and joint actions become components of projects and careers.

The processes involved in the integration of the different levels of action into this hierarchical system also need to be understood. If, as we asserted, the levels of action are the media of the self's construction, then the two previously described reflexivity processes may be seen as aiming to organize the goals of action into a hierarchy. As language permits to take back again action in a creative way, it allows certain hierarchical links between sub-goals and goals are construed. For example, during a counselling interview, or a discussion with parents, one adolescent will explain his/her daily actions, associated emotions and goals. Interacting with the counsellor or parents leads him/her to create a hierarchy between those actions (goals and emotions). For example he/she can consider that "playing soccer with friends" is fundamental for his/her self-construction, but not "playing piano". One action can thus support be-goals, joint-action and project, while the other just still remains a way to act.

Action Markers (Emotion, Feeling, Reason)

Individual behaviours, interactions with others, and conversation are actions which are combined in individuals' minds with emotional and sensory states, and with cognitions. From our perspective, these are the action markers from which stem goals, both do-goals and be-goals, that are integrated in SIF via the reflexivity processes. Emotion and feelings are very close. They are the primary markers of sensory affects: these may be considered to be individuals' basic ways of relating to their personal experiences. Following Damasio (1999), we may consider emotions and feelings as differentiating themselves only with regard to the "level of abstraction" of the mode of relating to self they imply. Emotions and feelings are suggested to be two different translations of a same state, the first one being a body translation and the second one a mental translation.

Emotion, feeling, and consciousness (reason) are then different translations of what could be named "affects," seen as results of agency, as results of one's own actions grasped either in an unaware body mode, in an immediate mental way, or
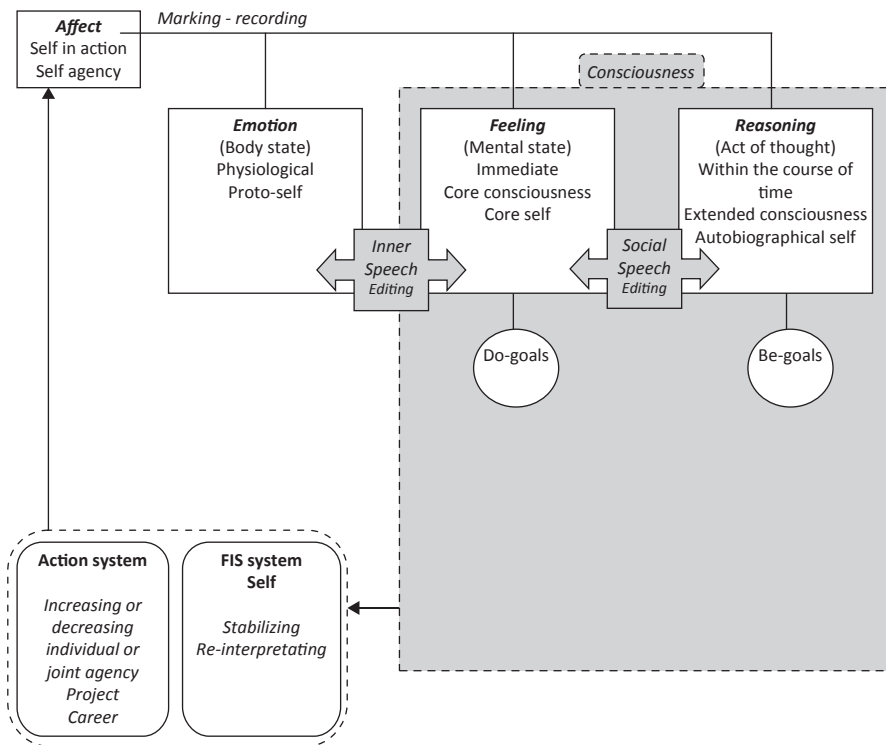
Fig. 6.1 Self-construction model

again in a rational consciousness. Following Damasio (1999), we therefore distinguish proto-self (internal body maps), core consciousness (immediate non-verbal neuronal maps), and extended consciousness (memorized neuronal maps) as being neurological activations of this acting self (See Fig. 6.1).

Conceiving consciousness within the action system leads to specifying the role played by each of these levels of consciousness in the formation of specific action goals. Indeed, if the states of consciousness are expressions of affect, then they can be markers: "do goals" or "be goals" needing to be integrated. Anger, joy, sadness, but also self-efficacy beliefs, self-esteem, interests or values, and so forth are such markers. They correspond to a certain translation or interpretation of affects within different levels of consciousness, from proto-self to extended consciousness. Thus, these different markers regulate action both internally and socially, through socially and contextually constructed goals. Young et al. (1997) stressed this point when they assigned the three following functions to emotions in action regulation: actions' self-regulations, strategies to lead joint actions, and influence in the process of giving actions a meaning.

From a dynamic standpoint, this translation or interpretation of emotion within the language of feeling is the first step towards consciousness, first to the core

consciousness and then to the extended one. It gives access to behaviors and their meanings, to objects, to others, to time, and to the construction of personal goals. In order to develop this awareness "of something" must also be put to test; that is, it must be translated into the language of emotions via a return to concrete action. Then, it makes a return journey so as to be re-transformed into affects that can participate in an increased agency. Thus, in such a circular system, emotion, as body state, comes always first but is continuously recycled within the language of feeling and consciousness.

Therefore it is by language that the markers of action are constructed, and edited in order to produce some forms about self that integrate goals which are organized in a hierarchical system of connections.

Language as Instrument of Consciousness

A certain level of language, conceived as instrument of thought, may be associated with each level of consciousness that was previously described. The translation of affects from one level to another—as the return activity to put to test the markers of action—require tools or instruments of translation and of implementation by action. Language appears to be the main instrument at work in the two types of reflexivity which contributes to editing the identity movie. The distinction made by Vygotsky (1934/1986) between social and inner languages permits one to associate these two tools with the two levels of consciousness previously described.

This distinction seems relevant to understand the dynamics of the SIF modeling through action. Language is considered by Vygotsky (1986) to be a psychological tool insofar as it permits acting, and consequently transforming oneself. Language mainly has a regulatory function of self; it is a means of behavioral self-regulation. If social language is constructed by individuals as imported from the external, then inner speech is private; according to Vygotsky (1986) it is deconstructed to the point of being a "speech almost without words" (p. 244) because "thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them" (p. 218). Social and inner languages may then be considered as tools to "direct" self: the latter playing its part at the level of core consciousness and the former at the level of extended consciousness. Social language (the one among the two languages that individuals are the more aware of) is a tool used to translate—to edit—feelings into SIF via an integration of action goals into personal goals. This corresponds to the transition from the core-self to autobiographic one, in Damasio's (1999) terms.

Respectively, inner speech is the main tool of emotion editing. On the one hand, it translates emotions into feelings by forming action goals. On the other hand, it puts the SIFs through trials of action, which prompt emotions. Thus inner speech appears more specifically to be a mediator between body and consciousness. It is indeed through inner speech that the body makes sense whilst a sense of self can be enacted bodily.

Thus, language seems to be at the very heart of the processes of self's construction, as it appears as a media either of reflexivity or of action (according to its level of interiority). Therefore, it seems now important to construct interventions—for "life designing" counsellors—that activate this double reflexivity which combines reflexivity and action.

Reflexivity and Action in Career and Life Designing Counselling

During counselling interviews, the dual and ternary forms of reflexivity appear as the major development factors of clients' views of their situations and their problems. In fact, according to the features of their situation, to their reflection progresses, and to the counselling interview phases, clients tend to favor either one form of reflexivity or the other. This finding emerged, notably, from the descriptions of career counselling interviews by Bangali (2011).

Bangali (2011) reported the client-counsellor interactions during interviews with two newly graduated doctors. Both of them were looking for a job and were in quite a difficult situation. Indeed, when they wrote their thesis, as most French doctoral students do, they pictured their future career within the expected SIF of a researcher in their specialty, working at university or at a state research body. However, job opportunities in these domains are extremely scarce and both of them had to remodel their anticipations and think about a career in a private company. During counselling, these two doctors completed the same exercise: they were asked to give all requested instructions to a double who would represent them the following day in a career interview, in such a way the recruiter wouldn't notice the substitution. Their statements uttered on that exercise occasion were analyzed. This analysis showed that each of them favored different enunciation modes which can be referred to either form of reflexivity.

Mr. G was 29 years old, held a neuroscience doctorate and had completed two post-doc years in the United States. During the 'instruction to a double' exercise, giving more importance to the dual reflexivity, he relied on the vocational identification he forged when he was working on his thesis: the expected SIF of becoming a "researcher in neurosciences." In doing the exercise, Mr. G. favored speech acts that displayed a critical distance and the setting up of precise future prospects. He developed dialogic processes that aimed to see his career expectation from another perspective: that of potential recruiter demands in a possible company, a recruiter and a company quite well delineated (at least in Mr. G's mind). The ternary reflexivity was activated by Mr. G only to specify his vocational expected SIF and to find the adequate attributes to transform it into an actual SIF: a SIF that could be recognized—validated—by a recruiter (in particular by one of the Sanofi laboratories where he pictured himself at work). He modified his SIF's anchoring point from the academic laboratory where he prepared his doctorate, to that of a pharmaceutical company where a job might be offered. Using the terms forged by Ginzberg et al. (1951), one can say that Mr. G used the ternary form of reflexivity to specify and realize his vocational expectation.

Ms. L was 33 years old, held a doctorate in political sciences, a postgraduate certificate in communication, and a master degree in philosophy. During the exercise, she gave more importance to the ternary reflexivity. Her goal was to sketch out and possibly specify, a vocational SIF with which she could identify. This appeared in her speech acts via a frequent use of linguistics markers—as questions and notices—that expressed an influence process on herself. Fundamentally, Ms. L wondered about herself and her different past experiences in order to outline a certain future prospect that would make them meaningful. She used the dual reflection processes only as auxiliaries of the ternary ones. This became evident in her search for keys elements in her life she could organize in view of certain future prospects (mainly, but not only, a career one) she could narrate to make a coherent life story. She achieved it eventually when she elicited a new vocational expected SIF—head of communications in the field of bioethics—that allowed her to aggregate her life from this future prospect. But to do so, she had to wonder about what was more important to her in her life. Using the language of Ginzberg et al. (1951), one can say that her speech and thought acts showed an exploration process of her life in order to crystallize it according to a certain future prospect that could unify it.

Thus, the two forms of reflexivity appeared to have been activated during these counselling interviews to help the client, either to sketch (as in the case of Ms. L), or to specify and implement (as in the case of M. G) some future plans. Certainly, such reflexivity was not only a purely abstract form of reasoning: the emotions that occur during counselling interactions play an indisputable part in these developments.

Nevertheless, the real issue in counselling intervention goes beyond the interaction situation. Efficient counselling requires action. It aims to involve the clients in a process of constructing their "real" lives: it is by their daily actions that they make their anticipated SIF become current ones or not. As previously explained, the reflexivity processes activated during a counselling interview leads to a reappraisal of the goals and sub-goals hierarchy, which is preliminary to the action. In turn, the latter allows the reinforcement, modification, and sometimes challenge, of a SIF and, at times, the current organization of the SIF system.

Frequently, one stresses the importance of the implementation—via action—of outcomes of counselling interventions (Savickas 2011): such an implementation being sometimes seen as the ultimate phase of the counselling process. However, some specific modes of supporting the construction of the self which take into account the two previously distinguished levels should be developed. Using a circular approach, such counselling approaches would go forward to cognitive developments via the social language of interactions and back to the feelings and emotions linked with the inner language and the action.

The association "Sport and Job" (*Sport—Emploi*, http://www.sport-emploi-concept.com/) offers a career intervention that may connect these two levels. The goal is to help school dropouts, very distant from the job market, either to begin some vocational training or in their transition to employment. Sport training is used to achieve that purpose. Through this intervention, it is expected that these young people construct certain new SIFs that would allow them to reach either goal. The intervention alternates sport training and debriefing sessions. The training sessions

permit to put through trials the conclusions and advices formulated during the debriefing ones. The training sessions are also used by the "sport coach and counsellor" to observe behaviors, attitudes, and interactions. These observations are discussed and interpreted during the debriefing sessions in the course of which players and coach/counsellor define together some other ways to be and act on the sports ground. Trainees then formulate actions and joint goals, which they must implement when they train. Thus, the involved activity is always a sports one. However, through this activity, reflecting on the activity, its transformation and the implementation of the transformed activity, a whole process of reflection on oneself in that situation begins: a consideration of one's ways to be, act, interact, etc., in connection with the experience of some emotions. Thus, the back and forth guided moves between the language interactions—mainly at time of the debriefing sessions—and the inner language—mainly at time of sport training—appears to be the principle that underlies the change of SIF, which then occurs progressively.

Such an intervention seems well-suited to the population it is intended for—mainly young men. Similar interventions need to be developed for people who differ as regards their age, gender, interests, etc. These would provide counsellors with a possibility to renew their practice and concentrate on some important aspects of counselling interventions (such as actions, feelings, emotions, and inner language) that, until now, are often left behind the scene. The development of interventions that refer to such theoretical considerations would allow counsellors to offer more appropriate supports to their clients who badly need to find tangible life bearings as they are now "living in an age of uncertainty", to quote Bauman's title (2007).

Conclusion

All the observations reported in this chapter converge: what was called "career counselling" (and previously vocational guidance) has been transformed into something quite different in relation with the emergence of liquid modernity. In liquid societies, individuals are indeed considered as fully responsible for the direction they give their careers and lives. To do so, they need to rely on their own reflexivity: they have to think about all their life experiences and to interpret them. Life and career interventions are then seen as aiming to support people in this endeavour.

As presented, reflexivity and action seem to be two useful concepts in order to enhance today's counselling practices. Two major kinds of interventions may be distinguished. The first one aims to help clients create or develop specific ways to relate to themselves and their experiences for the purpose of constructing a vocational subjective identity form that matches the current social norms of employability. These interventions, in guiding reflexivity on societal norms, may be named "guidance" or "advising interventions".

The purpose of the second type of interventions—which may be named counselling for life designing—is more fundamental: it is to assist people in developing the reflexivity they need to design their lives. During such interventions, clients think

about their lives in order to define (and redefine at each period of their lives) the major expectations (expected subjective identity forms) that give their lives meanings. The goal is then to help clients define their own norms. It is to assist each of them in finding the life bearings that will play the holding role the relatively steady social and ideological frameworks and routines used to provide individuals with in solid societies.

Reflexivity is involved in both kinds of interventions. But it is mainly in counselling for life designing that the different processes of reflexivity outlined above are fully mobilized. Indeed, during guidance interventions, clients relate to their various experiences from the perspective of defined goals. For example, they ask themselves which kind of competencies they have developed on the occasion of their various activities and interactions in relation to some working activities which would require such competencies. Thus, the relevant actions for counselling are chosen for their career efficacy (like career developmental tasks). Differently, during counselling interventions, clients wonder about their major life goals. Therefore, they need to rely on their ternary form of reflexivity to construct the interpretants that give meaning to what appears to them then, as their major life experiences (as Thomas did during the various counselling sessions reported above). But they need also to determine which ones among these interpretants are more meaningful to them. This implies they combine them with the emotions and feelings either they have already experienced on the occasion of their previous actions and interactions or as they will experience them on the occasion of further actions or dialogues, when they put these interpretants through trials. Then, the relevant actions for counselling are constructed through the reflexivity processes.

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