

Principles and
Practices for
Psychodynamic Group
Career Counseling

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The PICS Program

By

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and Viviana Langher

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PREFACE

The present monograph stems from the desire to provide a psychodynamic frame for career intervention, from a base of knowledge acquired through research and professional experiences in the fields of training, organizational consulting, job assessment, and psychological practice.

This monograph aims at proposing the PICS (Psychodynamic Intervention for Career Strategies) program, a group career counseling intervention model, inspired by the Kleinian psychoanalytic theory, in order to contribute to the advancement of studies in psychodynamic-oriented career counseling practices. In the light of a critical analysis of current research in career and work psychology, the conceptualization here proposed could provide new insights about not only vocational choices but more widely about unconscious processes potentially affecting career decisions, strategies and adjustment.

In detail, after the introduction about the role of unconscious processes in career-related issues, Chapter 1 provides an overview on the main psychodynamic approaches in vocational and career theories. Chapter 2 proposes the theoretical foundations of our psychodynamic framework, in particular Matte Blanco's bi-logic theory of mind and Klein's Object Relations Theory. However, this presentation may not be exhaustive about such psychological theories, which could be further deepened by referring to the original works of such authors. Chapter 3 deals with the conceptual model of the PICS program, with specific regard to the novel definition of career adjustment processes in terms of mania, envy, manic reparation and true reparation, as interacting psychological dynamics affecting career construction. As well, it illustrates both career counseling objectives and structural aspects of the program. Chapter 4 provides the description of career counseling sessions, including specific goals, general core themes and exercises, then followed by some case illustrations to highlight the main methodological aspects involved. Chapter 5 illustrates some technical issues, regarding the counselor's function, intervention strategies and procedures, and monitoring and assessment tools, along with examples and scripts which may be helpful for counselors-in-training or practitioners who wish to use the proposed model. As well, the preliminary evidence on the effectiveness of the PICS program is briefly presented. Ultimately, potentialities and limitations of this group career intervention are discussed.

Despite the novelty and the complexity of the proposed career approach, one of the strongest aspects of this monograph is its applied nature, as well as the constant effort to clarify some psychodynamic constructs, thus enabling readers to understand and efficiently use the information. We hope that the challenge to provide a clear and structured frame for psychodynamic group career counseling, which is almost rare in psychodynamic/psychoanalytic tradition, is not deemed as the provision of rigid techniques and does not result in a conceptual impoverishment. Instead, such an effort aims at promoting further insights among organizations and individuals who provide career services, and at developing higher sharing among counselors and practitioners.

However, it should be noted that the monograph may not be a comprehensive resource for professionals who want to learn about general group counseling processes and dynamics. Instead, it may represent a useful supplement for someone who has foundational information on psychodynamic theories and wants to learn about the use of a career counseling group from a psychodynamic perspective. As well, this contribution may provide psychologists with potential insights and useful suggestions for dealing with career-related issues also in clinical practice.

INTRODUCTION

The nature and structure of careers are evolving quickly and, consequently, the area of career development has become more important, and more challenging, than ever. Indeed, the contemporary labor market is more and more characterized by instability and continuous change in terms of employability, competences and demands, also due to the role of globalization and innovation technologies. Career paths are not linear (Wickramasinghe and Perera 2010) and multiple transitions can be experienced in the working life, therefore career development relies on acquiring competences to plan a career path rather than to identify a specific role. Such competences are related with a specific viewpoint about a career, conceiving it as pertaining to the relationship between the individual and the several work contexts one can encounter in life. In the 21st century labor market, such contexts can vary and change significantly during the lifespan (Savickas et al. 2009), reshaping the former idea of a career made of consequential steps within the same organizational or work environment.

In order to clarify basic terminology, *career* can be defined as “the interaction of work roles and other life roles over a person’s lifespan, including how they balance paid and unpaid work, and their involvement in learning and education” (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2008, 11). Such an interaction is something tangibly different from the concept of *work*, which is a conscious effort to produce a benefit for oneself and/or the others, and the concept of *job*, which refers to a task-, outcome- or organization-centered position (Sears 1982). The width and the complexity of the career concept appear clear when compared to such references.

Nowadays, we can find several career-related interventions, which have strongly drawn upon the contingent market conditions in which they were conceptualized (Savickas et al. 2009). Thus, over the years, we have overcome perspectives of a career as a staged process (Super 1955) or as dependent on personality traits (Holland 1973), and we are now looking at the person’s overall life design more comprehensively, as this standpoint can combine the inner motivational resources of the individual with the contextual factors that enable employability and professional effectiveness (Savickas et al. 2009).

Among the interventions that aim at developing the individual's career potential, we can list different scopes, such as vocational guidance or career counseling, and different methodologies and settings. Whereas vocational guidance can be conceived as the "process of assisting the individual to choose an occupation, prepare for it, enter up on and progress on it" (Super 1951, 92), career counseling can be conceptualized as "the interaction between a career/guidance counselor and an individual or a group. Career counseling emphasizes self-awareness and understanding and facilitates the development of a satisfying and meaningful life/work direction as a basis to guide learning, work and transition decisions, as well as how to manage responses to changing work and learning environments over the lifespan" (European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network 2008, 12).

Within the current career counseling offer, we can find a variety of interventions that may range, in terms of methodological approach, from individual to group counseling, from computer-assisted sessions to facilitator/counselor-free activities. In individual career counseling, best practices suggest that the counselor should work through a variety of tools and ingredients, such as feedback and interpretation, written exercises about career goals, world of work information provision, modeling and support building (Brown et al. 2003; Brown and McPartland 2005). Group career counseling works similarly to individual counseling. It is generally led by a conductor/counselor, it can range from an unstructured to a structured approach, and it can add to it opportunities for discussion, support, and validation among the group members. Research evidence in group counseling suggests that structured interventions with some space for individual feedback work better than unstructured ones (Brown and McPartland 2005; Whiston 2003). Computer-assisted career guidance is based on platforms or software designed to provide career assessments, occupational information, career options, tools for decision-making and career planning. This option alone has not shown the same effectiveness levels than the previously described ones, however the combination with other forms of counseling can improve its results (Brown et al. 2003; Ryan 1999). Counselor-free interventions are activities in which individuals do not rely upon a career counselor in order to collect and evaluate information around their career development. Some of these interventions include formal or informal conversations about interests, work attitudes, values, skills, and career aspirations. However, there is evidence that they are less effective than counselor-led interventions (Brown and Ryan Krane 2000; Whiston, Brecheisen, and Stephens 2003).

The current literature in vocational and career fields strongly highlights the relevance of strategies to cope with the challenges of the labor market, in terms of flexibility, proactivity and adaptability (Bocciardi et al. 2017; Del Corso 2013; Savickas 2012). As well, career-related adjustment processes are demonstrated to be biased by imagined and unconscious barriers which “may lead to procrastination in career decision-making or to making less than optimal career-decisions” (Levin and Gati 2015, 168). In this regard, the empirical evidence from decision theory, neuroscience and behavioral economics confirms the role of emotional and non-conscious processes in career-related issues (Krieshok, Black, and McKay 2009; Yates 2015), although classical and prevailing theories of career development are generally consistent with scientific reductionism (Bloch 2005). Indeed, two main limitations of the rational approach can be advocated about its suitability for career practice (Yates 2015): (a) decision-making tends to rely on gut instinct rather than on conscious logic in most situations; and (b) rational processing has been found to be less effective than heuristic based unconscious reason, especially in non-optimal decision-making conditions and noisy, stressful and unforgiving environments. Consistently with the dual processing model proposed in neuroscience (Epstein 1994; Kahneman 2003; Lieberman 2003), it would be more appropriate to consider both rational/conscious and intuitive/unconscious processes as mutually informing career decisions and strategies and, ultimately, career adjustment (Krieshok, Black, and McKay 2009).

Despite the limits of rationality and the abundance of non-conscious processes (Krieshok, Black, and McKay 2009), the psychodynamic approach has no substantive presence in current career development literature (McIlveen 2014) and its use does not seem to be so common in career guidance and career counseling (Lehman et al. 2015). This seems to be confirmed by a recent review on career guidance and counseling by Bikos et al. (2013) that, consistent with what was reported by other authors (Hartung and Subich 2011; Patton and McMahon 2014), identified the Person-Environment fit model, social-cognition theory (SCT) and social-constructivism as the currently prevailing career theories. According to these theoretical models, career-related decision-making and planning are mainly influenced by personal interests, abilities and values (Person-Environment fit model; Holland 1997), self-efficacy, beliefs and outcome expectations (Social-Cognition Theory; Lent, Brown, and Hackett 1994) or autobiographical narratives about professional identity (Social Constructivism; Savickas 2005). In detail, the Person-Environment fit model (Holland 1997) assumes that career success, satisfaction and

stability are based on the coherence between the client's characteristics (e.g., interests, abilities, values, vocations, personality) and specificities of work settings. Therefore, interventions mainly aim at assessing job opportunities and career paths which better fit with individual job profiles. Instead, social-cognitive theory (Lent, Brown, and Hackett, 1994) focuses on cognitive factors (e.g., self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, career preparedness) that, intertwined with individual and environmental variables (e.g., gender, ethnicity, past experiences, social support, barriers), can sustain effective career-related decision-making and planning. In this sense, interventions are addressed to enlarge the client's professional opportunities, detect barriers and perceived obstacles to professional development and increase self-efficacy by working on false beliefs. Then, social-constructivism proposes a postmodern narrative approach (Savickas 2005) according to which career decisions more widely refer to self-construction processes within a life-design paradigm. Autobiographical narratives about professional identity can enhance awareness about the relationship with the social context and life trajectories. In this framework, interventions aim at promoting both higher career flexibility and adaptability to cope with occupational challenges and a sense of coherence and continuity.

However, such models do not seem to adequately grasp the role of non-cognitive factors or non-rational processing and behaviors, because they mostly pertain to unspecific factors or personality-related traits, such as psychological well-being, anxiety or self-concept (Gati, Asulin-Peretz, and Fisher 2012; Viola et al. 2017). Therefore, as affirmed by Krieshok et al. (2009), "the representation of vocational introspection as a conscious and willful process remains the dominant paradigm" (278).

CHAPTER ONE

AN OVERVIEW ON PSYCHODYNAMIC APPROACHES IN VOCATIONAL AND CAREER THEORIES

Despite the contribution of psychodynamic theories to career research having been developed since the middle of the twentieth century, to date, they have received scarce recognition in career-related literature, probably due to their scarce reliance on work and economic issues and to the notorious problems related to operationalization in the psychoanalytic tradition (Silver and Spilerman 1990; Walsh and Osipow 1990).

In this regard, Watkins and Savickas (1990) provided a review about the three main psychodynamic theories existing in vocational and career psychology: the psychoanalytic theory (Bordin 1984; Osipow 1983; Roe 1964) mainly focused on unconscious needs, impulses and motivations; Erikson's theory (1963, 1968) was grounded on the concept of identity in the career development process across the life span; and the Adlerian personality theory (Watkins 1984a), which highlighted the relevance of lifestyle, life tasks, family atmosphere and relationships, and early recollections in career and vocational behaviors.

Overall, such classic approaches "make a significant contribution to the theories of life career development by adding the dimension of unconscious career choices" (Malach-Pines and Yafe-Yanai 2001, 171). However, they show some limitations regarding the specific application of psychodynamic insights into the career field and the provision of consistent operative tools. In this regard, the most recent psychodynamic developments of career counseling aim at connecting intra-psychic and career issues to a greater extent. In particular, two approaches seem to be particularly promising to identify an agenda for future career interventions: the developmental career counseling proposed by Nevo and Wiseman (2002), which incorporates short-term dynamic psychotherapy principles into career counseling, and the group career counselling with a psychodynamic focus, developed by Lehman et al. (2015) from Bohoslavsky's clinical strategy. These approaches are more strongly centered on the interface of

the personal and career issues and on the use of a clinical-operative method, thus providing a better integration between the intra-psychic (subjective dimension) and the external world (labor market).

Psychoanalytic theories

In contrast to trait-and-factor theories (Parsons 1909), which stress the understanding of observable and measurable characteristics of the person as essential to the making of a realistic career choice, psychoanalysis-related theories (e.g., Bordin, Nachnan, and Segal 1963; Brill 1949) explain vocational choice in terms of the individual's motives or drives.

These theories generally apply the usual Freudian concepts and principles, looking at careers as a sublimation of the basic drives, where the coping mechanisms acquired to control sexual and aggressive impulses influence the development of personality, which then determines the choice of a career. Within the psychoanalytic perspective work can be deemed as a result of sublimation; as well, work allows the pleasure and reality principles to be combined, thus satisfying both *id* and *ego* demands (Watkins and Savickas 1990). In addition to this, psychoanalytic theories were pioneers in calling attention for childhood in the study of vocational behavior. In this regard, the contributions of authors such as Roe (1957) and Bordin (1984; Bordin, Nachmann, and Segal 1963) may be considered crucial in highlighting the importance of the first years of life and of family context in the development of personality structures and dynamics that, in turn, would affect future vocational choice.

Generally, psychoanalytic theories on career counseling have been criticized because of their excessive emphasis on "internal" factors as the most salient ones in career choice (Ginzberg 1951), which is mostly viewed as a function of individual psychodynamics and internal needs, with poor attention given to the conditions and variables that impose constraints upon the decision-making process (Crites 1969). Moreover, from a behavioristic perspective, the strong concern with motivational (non-observable) constructs seems to have introduced unnecessary complexity into the conceptualization of career determination.

Roe's need theory

Like other psychoanalytic theories, Roe's need theory of vocational choice posits that career choices are a function of personality and affective quality of parent-child relationships. In Roe's theory (Roe 1957; Roe and Siegelman 1964), familial and other early experiences influence the

development of the needs hypothesized by Maslow (1954). The satisfaction of such needs determines the extent to which the various drives motivate an individual's vocational behavior. In her conceptualization of personality, Roe referred to the psychological needs that develop out of parent-child interactions consistently with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1954). Roe identified three categories of parent-child interaction patterns, each including two subcategories: (1) emotional concentration on the child, as either overprotective or overdemanding, (2) avoidance of the child, as either emotional rejection or neglect, and (3) acceptance of the child, as either casual or loving. From these familial interactions, Roe thought that children might develop an orientation either toward or not toward people. In order to compare the individual to a wide range of occupations, Roe created a comprehensive two-dimensional classification system consisting in eight categories of occupations (service, business contact, organization, technology, outdoor, science, general culture, and arts and entertainment), each one organized across six levels (professional and managerial, levels 1 and 2; semiprofessional and small business, level 3; skilled, level 4; semiskilled, level 5; and unskilled, level 6).

Overall, Roe's contribution to occupational behavior features two major components: a) the effort to develop a typological classification of occupations according to the degree to which a given occupation requires to deal with people (e.g., social work) or with objects (e.g., engineering); b) the classification of types of early parental relationships, which predispose the child to choose "person-directed" or "non-person-directed" occupations, depending on the pleasant and rewarding nature of such relationships consistently with a sort of approach-avoidance theory.

Research about the impact of parent-child interactions on career choice has not produced enough evidence of validity for Roe's theory. Specifically, some concerns exist with the subject's recall of parent-child interactions, differences in parenting styles, and sample sizes. Roe recognized the limitations of her theory in terms of application, as well as in adequately representing the experiences of women and minorities. However, Roe's classification system later contributed to the development of career assessment tools and to the mapping of the world of work.

Bordin's psychodynamic model

Despite other authors (King and Bennington 1972) having applied some psychoanalytic principles to counseling processes, Bordin, Nachmann and Segal (1963) used a model of psychosexual development in order to explain the effects that needs, impulses and motives have on

vocational behavior. From this perspective, the term “psychodynamic” refers to any psychological system that strives for an explanation of behavior in terms of motives and drives (English and English 1958). As Bordin pointed out, the psychodynamic view does not preclude the goal of providing persons with the information and skills necessary to achieve several life tasks, such as career decision-making, intimate relations development or leisure skills improvement. Besides, this view is aimed at preventing psychological conflicts during personality and vocational development, and at intervening at the turning points in the life cycle. To this aim, the concepts of diagnosis, process, and outcomes are particularly relevant.

Diagnosis. Interview techniques, test interpretation and occupational information are considered as relevant resources for diagnosis. Differently from the traditional and nosological perspective of diagnosis proposed by trait-and-factor career counseling, Bordin (1946) relied on a dynamic understanding of client problems, grounded on more psychologically-oriented constructs, such as choice anxiety, dependence and self-conflict. Based on motivational conflicts found among college students seeking career counseling, Bordin and Kopplin (1973) conceptualized a new diagnostic system made of the following categories:

1. Synthetic difficulties: cases of minimum pathology and conflict in which the major problem lies in the difficulty to achieve cognitive clarity, mostly due to diverse interests, limited experience or realistic obstacles.
2. Identity problems: assumed to be related with the formation of a feasible self and self-perception (not necessarily fully conscious), including an inappropriate sex model, differentiation issues, paralysis, lack of unrealistic identity, superimposed identity, and absence of an available model.
3. Gratification conflicts: mainly due to mixed approach-avoidance reactions about one or more fulfillments to be attained through a given work identity.
4. Change orientation: a client’s unhappiness with him/herself and struggle to change him/herself via vocational choice. This may depend on adopting an occupational identity that represents the stable personal characteristics that one seeks.
5. Overt pathology: the pathology gravity forestalls vocational focus and prevents the client from doing any kind of work.
6. Unclassifiable: other problems that pertain to motivational conflict.

7. Unclassifiable: other problems that do not pertain to any motivational conflict.

Process. Three different stages were identified by Bordin (1968) as referring to the overall process of career development.

The first stage involves exploration and contract setting and focuses on the psychodynamics of career decision-making, as a crossing point between the personal and the vocational life. The counselor's task here is to dodge a shallow and simplistic analysis of the client's demand, as well as a seductive attempt to involve the client in non-vocational therapy. The second stage involves inquiring about alternative scopes of counseling that can be focused on vocational choice or more widely include personal development. The last stage refers to the actualization of change, assuming that the client will choose at least some change in personality, even if restricted to vocational identity, with a thrust toward increased self-awareness and understanding.

Outcomes. A first objective refers to supporting the client in career decision-making, classifying the presented problems consistently with the diagnostic system (e.g., synthetic difficulties, identity problems, gratification conflicts, etc.). Besides this, a wider goal pertains to changing some aspects of the client's personality, through two main ways. In the first one, in case the client is willing to undergo personal counseling relatively distinct from a career focus, the acknowledged outcome could be a sort of personality change, for instance in terms of a symptomatic anxiety reduction. Whereas, in case the client chooses a career focus, counseling may well have healthy effects upon personal development. For instance, in a situation of a pervasive career indecisiveness intertwined with submission to an authoritarian father, counseling may lead a dependent client to undertake greater personal responsibility, even without the counselor directly dealing with the son-father relationship. From this perspective, both the career decision and personality change—achieved through whatsoever methods—are the desired end states of the client following successful psychodynamic career counseling.

Overall, Bordin's psychodynamic model significantly contributed to conceptualizing career counseling and development within the psychoanalytic tradition, conceiving career choice as involving the client's needs and as a developmental process. However, as also Bordin and Kopplin (1973) affirmed, there is the need for better explaining the differential treatment implications of their classification of motivational conflicts related to vocational development. As well, some general considerations about the usefulness of exploring the family constellation

and the client's experience of it—so as to understand how identity formation is influencing the client's learning—should be specified to a greater extent in order to clearly guide interview behavior.

Eriksonian theory

As stated by Watkins and Savickas (1990), Erikson's theory of psychosocial development seems to have much to offer to the career field thanks to its developmental nature and its framework encompassing the entire life span. According to Erikson, individuals are confronted with psychosocial tasks or crises that require adaptation and resolution through eight stages of growth and development in the course of their life. Erikson's contribution was strongly influenced by Freud's (1961) topographical conception of personality; however, whereas Freud focused on *id*, Erikson focused on *ego* psychology and on the role that culture and society play in the conflicts taking place within the *ego* itself. The stages described by Erikson should be conceived in developmental terms, as the resolution of the tasks occurring in a specific stage enables the individual to deal with the next stage and to cope with its related psychosocial tasks. Indeed, successful completion of each stage results in basic virtues acquisition, representing strength features that the *ego* can use to resolve subsequent crises. Erikson lists eight stages that refer to two conflicting ideas that must be resolved successfully for a person to become a confident adult and these are: 1) Trust/Mistrust; 2) Autonomy/Shame; 3) Initiative/Guilt; 4) Industry/Inferiority; 5) Identity/Role Confusion; 6) Intimacy/Isolation; 7) Generativity/Stagnation; 8) Ego Integrity/Despair.

The fifth stage concerning the conflict between identity and role confusion seems to be particularly relevant due to its implications for career development. This stage occurs during adolescence, from about 12-18 years, when individuals search for a sense of self and personal identity through an intense exploration of personal values, beliefs, and goals. In this perspective, an occupation may represent the means by which the individual expresses his/her identity and a career is a way to realize one's contribution to the world, through the transition from childhood to adulthood.

The implications for career development are clearly discussed in Erikson's writings on occupational identity. Actually, Erikson viewed occupational identity as the most central domain of identity formation, followed by religious and political identity. During the psychosocial moratorium, much attention and energy are directed at defining or constructing one's work interests and building skills in the selected

occupational choice. Identity formation, such as occupational identity, is constructed within a broader environment made of culture, institutions, family, and friends.

As occupational identity gets shaped, certain important self-regulation mechanisms emerge that may promote the formation of *ego* virtues or strengths, in turn enhancing one's personality. These factors lead the adolescent into adulthood, where commitment to work fosters a sense of direction that is supported by society. However, when this is not encouraged in a psychosocial moratorium, a failure in identity definition leads to role confusion and extensive emotional angst, anxiety, and lack of direction in the adolescent's life and future.

Some evidence exists about the importance of the identity stage for career development and career choice issues (Galinsky and Fast 1966; Hershenson 1967) in line with Erikson's theory. Indeed, individuals with a higher sense of identity tend to use available information to make successful career decisions, show greater self-knowledge, decisiveness and career maturity, are more satisfied with their careers and are overall more adjusted and productive in work settings (Holland, Gottfredson, and Power 1980; Holland and Holland 1977; Munley 1975).

Overall, as pointed out by Munley (1975), this theory may help identify personality factors associated with success in coping with career development tasks. Despite Erikson's theory having provided interesting insights on how identity formation may affect the vocational development of the self, the main limitations refer to the lack of translation of such a theory into a career counseling technique and to its poor practical implications on career development across the entire life span.

Adlerian personality theory

According to Adler (1925) human behavior is driven by "striving for perfection", as the desire we all have to fulfill our potential and realize our ideals, motivated by the will to overcome one's "inferiority complex" and inherent limitations, and thus to create our lifestyle. Before exploring the Adlerian approach in career assessment and career counseling, some basic concepts that underlie Adler's individual psychology and personality theory should be acknowledged. Some of these are: lifestyle, early recollections, birth-order, social interest, and work as a life task. Although these basic concepts have solid foundations from a theoretical perspective and appear as promising in terms of career assessment variables, it should be underlined that research examining the implications of such variables

for career behavior is still limited and needs to be studied more deeply and systematically (Watkins 1993).

Lifestyle. Lifestyle has been considered as a synonym of personality, self or *ego* and represents the framework within which the other concepts fit. Indeed, lifestyle allows the understanding of individual values, preferences, motivating convictions, ethics, and morals, providing a comprehensive and meaningful picture of the teleology of the person. Precisely, lifestyle can be deemed as composed of three parts: attitudes toward self, attitudes toward others, and attitudes toward life. These are directed by the person's unique goal and are self-consistent with such a goal. From this perspective, career choice reflects an implementation of the lifestyle, because it involves putting the lifestyle into practice via one's career (Watkins 1984b). Attitude toward self affects the way in which people represent themselves as workers; attitude toward others reflects how they might relate to others while at work, and attitude toward life indicates the perceived meaning and purpose of work in their lives. For example, the choice of jobs such as counseling, nursing, or some other helping profession may reflect a lifestyle where people might perceive themselves as people-oriented and willing to help others and ultimately to realize a desire for social equality. However, only a few studies contributed to this research field, often with inconsistent primary results (Emerson and Watson 1987; Newlon and Mansager 1986).

Early recollections. Early recollections (ERs) refer to memories that are single, specific happenings, which can be clearly visualized and occur before the age of 8 (Mosak 1958). As Adler stated (1958) ERs may indicate significant childhood memories and events that individuals repeat to keep themselves concentrated on their goals, in order to be prepared, by means of past experiences, to meet the future challenges with an already tested way of behaving. In other words, they are reflections of the present (Verger and Camp 1970) that enable us to begin understanding the person's lifestyle. In vocational guidance, first memories should be considered very important because they can emphasize specific senses (e.g., seeing, hearing, activity and movement) and could possibly lead one to consider a job in which such senses are used. Therefore, examining ER themes in career counseling may provide useful insights about occupational interest, active/passive attitudes, affiliation or isolation orientation, a desire for leadership or subordination, a desire for superior, inferior, or egalitarian relationships with colleagues and peers, and a focus on people, data, or things (Watkins 1984a). Despite past research having supported ER differences across college majors and occupations (Watkins

1993), the practical implications of such research findings in both career assessment and counseling need to be further explored.

Birth-order. Birth-order refers to the position of the child within the family, both sequentially and psychologically (Manaster and Corsini 1982). Adler (1937) indicated that certain personality features sometimes depend on the different positions (e.g., with the firstborn often being responsible and the second-born often being rebellious); however, he highlighted that character does not merely depend on the objective child's birth order, but on the interpretation of such a situation. As a component of the overall lifestyle, birth-order could provide further career-related information about how individuals see themselves as co-workers, how they might function as part of a group, and what behaviors they might enact as a part of that group, consistent with early family relationships (Watkins 1984a). Overall, previous studies show some consistency with Adler's ideas (Watkins 1993) by demonstrating birth-order effects (e.g., with first-borns showing more dominance and Type A characteristics than later-borns). However, the failure of such studies to adequately control for intervening variables surely reduces the weight of the resulting findings and conclusions.

Social interest. Social interest refers to a basic interest in and concern for others (Crandall 1981) and can be considered as the most distinctive concept in Adler's conceptualization (Ansbacher 1968). Watkins (1984a) hypothesized that work may represent the principal means by which people contribute to society, and that their productivity on the job may be affected by how much they feel part of a social system. Thus, social interest may positively correlate with the quality of work outputs, as well as with overall job satisfaction (Amerikaner, Elliott, and Swank 1988).

Work as a life task. Adler (1958) identified three different life tasks that people have to cope with: friendship (social), intimacy (love), and work (occupation). Equipped with their personal guidelines about life, themselves, and others, individuals move from childhood to adulthood with a societal expectation that they will become more responsible, cooperative, and able to cope with life situations. Generally, the play of children can be considered as their main existential occupation in preparation for the future, through which attitudes, relationships and competences are developed. Work or leisure work as a life task was conceived by Adler as very important for the maintenance of life; whereas, inability to fulfill this task was regarded as being a symptom of serious unbalance and illness (Dreikurs 1953).

To date, two main career approaches have been developed based upon the Adlerian theory. The first one was proposed by McKelvie and Friedland (1978) and consists in a model of vocational counseling and assessment focused on the uniqueness of the individual and providing the client with precise individualized information (also see McKelvie 1979). Specifically, career goals of this counseling approach refer to three relevant concepts: goals toward which one is striving; obstacles (both subjective and objective) that prevent the individual from achieving goals; and patterns of effective or ineffective behavior that individuals use to move toward their own goals. These goals, obstacles, and strategies form a coherent system, which provides understanding into how an individual operates and why. To this purpose, the lifestyle interview is utilized to collect detailed information about clients' family constellation and early recollections, which are relevant to career assessment. Nevertheless, as stated by Watkins (1993), such an approach seems to be a rather literal translation of Adlerian psychotherapy methods to career assessment and counseling. As well, it has the major limitations of being time-consuming and not directly bearing upon the client's immediate experience, thus making this traditional approach more suitable when issues of career adjustment come into play.

A second approach relying on the Adlerian theory can be found in the career-style method by Savickas (1989; Watkins and Savickas 1990). This creative method, while providing an understanding of the individual's lifestyle, does not require detailed family information or early recollections, thus preventing some of the problems of the lifestyle interview-based approach (e.g., McKelvie and Friedland 1978). The method of career-style appraisal appears to be particularly fruitful when issues of career choice are concerned. Specifically, it consists of an interview procedure composed of stimulus questions about the client's life goal and lifestyle. The interview questions focus on eight areas: role models, preferred books, magazines, leisure activities, school subjects, mottos, ambitions, and decisions. All career-style assessment data provide information about the view of the self (role models and leisure) and the environment (magazines and school work), as well as interests and decision-making (daydreams, ambitions, and choices), which overall lead to the detection of the client's career style and most suitable counseling activities.

Other psychodynamic approaches to career counseling

Developmental Career Counseling (DCC) according to Mann's model

One of the most interesting psychodynamic contributions to career counseling has been developed in Israel by Nevo and Wiseman (2002). The authors highlight the theoretical and practical benefits of short-term dynamic psychotherapy (STDP), specifically based on James Mann's thought (1973), to developmental career counseling (DCC) focused on the interface of personal and career issues. Mann's approach was chosen because of its developmental orientation and techniques. This model is deemed as easy-to-use compared to other approaches and seems suitable to counseling and guidance practice with specific regard to university settings (Gelso and Johnson 1983; Hill 1989). In more detail, the specific principles of STDP incorporated into DCC refer to:

- A life-span approach, which allows a dynamic description of the client's career development process;
- The time limit—in terms of the restricted number of sessions (generally from 2 to 10)—taking into account realistic constraints and the need to adapt to reality;
- The importance of the working alliance as an ability to develop confidence in the counseling outcomes;
- Rapid and early assessment to evaluate the client's resources and suitability for a time-limited intervention with specific objectives;
- The specific and directed focus on a small number of central conflicts, such as those regarding self-esteem or autonomy;
- Active and directive counselor participation by outlining a plan of action or by offering support and guidance;
- Therapeutic flexibility, in terms of multiple techniques such as role play, guided-imagery and homework in addition to interpreting and clarifying;
- The termination of counseling is accompanied by a clear career decision or by a decision to delay the career decision, for example by defining with the client how to proceed or raising issues of independence anxiety;
- Criteria for determining client aptness to DCC, such as above-average intelligence, high motivation for counseling, previous satisfactory adjustment, as well as the ability to focus on one

central issue, relate to others, freely experience and express emotions and handle separation.

Compared to classic career counseling models, the original contribution of DCC is its emphasis on both the career issue and on the central issue regarding an interpersonal or intra-personal conflict, in order to deal with the client's chronic suffering as manifested in the current developmental stage of the career-related decision. As affirmed by the authors (Nevo and Wiseman 2002), the proposed working model represents an attempt to respond to the claims of Watkins and Savickas (1990) regarding the difficulty of applying insights from psychodynamic therapy to the career field and of providing career counselors with operative tools within a psychodynamic perspective.

Group career counseling with a psychodynamic focus

A group career counseling model with a psychodynamic focus was developed in Brazil and was aimed at promoting participants' career and life projects, from a rich and consolidated practice developed at the University of Sao Paulo's Institute of Psychology since the 1980s (Lehman et al. 2015). Such a model did not emerge from other, more acknowledged, psychodynamic proposals, such as those of Anne Roe or Edward Bordin (Lehman et al. 2011); instead, it was grounded on the use of a clinical strategy (Bohoslavsky 1977) and a group intervention modality (Carvalho 1995). Indeed, from the 1970s the Argentine psychoanalyst Rodolfo Bohoslavsky (1977) started to deal with career issues by relying on British psychoanalytical theory, with specific regard to contributions by Klein (1984) and Wenders (1965). This author theorized on clinical strategy and its characteristics, as opposed to psycho-technical or actuarial strategy, assuming that career decisions can be made effective through the elaboration of conflicts and anxieties in coping with future challenges. Besides, he stressed the importance of considering the active and dynamic role played by the client in the counseling process, as well as the exploration of socio-cultural reality in order to anticipate future changes. In brief, as reported by Lehman et al. (2015), this strategy features four main theoretical assumptions.

First, Bohoslavsky proposed that career choices are the result of identification processes and links established with the world, defining what one should be and do (or not) through the profession. Secondly, vocational choices stem from the integration between unconscious desires expressed in vocational identity (internal reality) and conscious needs

expressed in occupational identity (external reality). Therefore, vocational and occupational identity should be distinguished one from the other: the former consists of the answer to the "why" and the "because" of the professional identity; the latter refers to the "doing" that allows the implementation of the vocational identity within the social reality. The basic hypothesis is that vocations reveal the self's need to repair internal objects via the choice of a profession; such a reparation process is characterized by the capacity to tolerate frustration and elaborate loss that leads the individual to choose a profession as an expression of the *ego* strength instead of defensive strategies. In this regard, authentic reparation is clearly differentiated from pseudo-reparations, such as: manic reparation, where guilt feelings are instead denied and the individual resorts to manic defenses; compulsive reparation, where persecutory guilt imposes demanding activities on the *ego* and progressively reduces the subject's autonomy; and melancholic reparation, where the *ego* is identified with the object and self-destruction represents the only way to repair it. From this perspective, clinical strategy should allow the understanding of basic vocational conflicts "involved in choosing a way to be through something to do (an occupation)" (Bohoslavsky 1977, 66). Thirdly, because Bohoslavsky strongly criticized counseling that was strictly based on test results, the psychological interview (in both individual and group settings) represents the fundamental instrument of the clinical strategy that integrates reflection and action as an operational unit, where career choice is regarded as influenced by a complex set of family, economic, social and political factors. Finally, the career counseling model is considered as composed of three different intervention stages, which refer to: diagnosis, that aims at identifying the basic vocational conflict; prognosis, that refers to the client's capacity to start and continue the counseling process; and then guidance in terms of the individual or group counseling process.

Consistently with Bohoslavsky's clinical strategy, Carvalho (1995) agreed with a shift in counseling practice from diagnosis and advice provision to self-awareness and autonomy in career decision-making. As well, she proposed a group intervention modality that could provide the client with an experience of profound knowledge about the self, the other and the self-other interaction. Indeed, the group setting tends to stimulate cooperation instead of competition, because of the opportunity to learn from others' experience and receive help from those who share the same vocational conflict situation (Carvalho 1995).

From this perspective, the objectives of group career counseling with a psychodynamic focus (Lehman et al. 2015) rely on a clinical-operative

method, which involves both the subjective dimension of seeking meaning in life, and the instrumental dimension of planning actions in the world via the development of a professional life project. The clinical-operative approach has the advantage of considering specific individuals' characteristics in a strong relationship with their contexts, thus overcoming the limitations of a purely individual approach grounded on trait-and-factor theories. The clinical-operative approach thus combines the capacity to deeply comprehend the individual perspective, to put it in relation with the context characteristics and to enhance one's own capacity of action on the labor market.

Specifically, such group career counseling consists of six sessions of approximately 3 hours each, where two group facilitators help clients share experiences, make links to their careers and reflect on social and cultural pressures based on their parental models. Facilitators' strategies mainly deal with the use of playful group techniques to have access to internal contents, the reflection on personal projects and the analysis of the transference elements. The group is meant as an intermediate space or a holding environment for the development of career projects, which allows the integration between the personal reality and the labor market.

Along with the relevance of the use of the group technique in psychodynamic career counseling, the most fruitful contribution of such a model relies on the original introduction of the construct of reparation derived from the object relations theory, which consents to widen and further develop the earlier proposed Freudian notion of sublimation, as also highlighted by several pieces of research (Bohoslavsky 1977; Millan et al. 2005; Ruprecht 2004). Indeed, previously the notion of career was mostly connected with a sublimation process, intended as the gratification of destructive impulses through the refocusing of psychological energy away from a sexual object to a new more social-useful achievement. Instead, a career is now meant as resulting from the self's need to repair the damages caused by one's destructive phantasies towards internal objects. However, it should be acknowledged that the contribution of an interpretative frame based on reparation seems to be almost limited to a literature dealing with vocations and career choices, without clear and more comprehensive implications on different stages of the career path and professional growth.

In sum, the specific contribution provided by the psychodynamic approach to vocational and career theories seems to highlight the relevance of emotional life in processes of career construction and development, with specific regard to the role of unconscious phantasies. Such an

emotional life stems from early experiences and family stories that may later influence career choices and strategies, thus showing the limitations of a psychometric and attitudinal perspective that looks at the individuals as separated from their own relational contexts. The importance of the individual-context relationship is particularly highlighted by the developments of psychodynamic theories in Latin America, where career counseling is traditionally characterized by the need for dealing with unstable and flexible socio-occupational conditions that are potentially relevant in today's world of work. In this regard, the concept of reparation seems to be particularly fruitful to account for the strategies and actions that people enact to relate to the work contexts and to face psychosocial vulnerability. From this perspective, psychodynamic career interventions might benefit from considering a career as both a symbolic and a real object, by integrating subjective and instrumental aspects in career planning and development, so as to promote individuals' capacity of action on the labor market.

CHAPTER TWO

A PSYCHODYNAMIC CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE CAREER: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The conceptual model here proposed stems from the integration of several psychoanalytic theoretical contributions, especially Matte Blanco's theory of the mind (1975) and object relations theory (Klein 1940), with the aim of developing an interpretative framework looking at unconscious dimensions affecting career choices, decisions and strategies, thus overcoming the limitations of a rational paradigm (Krieshok, Black, and McKay 2009; Yates 2015).

In particular, Matte Blanco's bi-logic theory of mind provides a meaningful frame for conceiving and utilizing the unconscious dimensions by retrieving the first Freudian topographical model of mind. Such a model describes the unconscious as a mental system with its own logic consistent with the language of emotions. Specifically, the bi-logic theory of mind implies the interaction between the symmetric logic, reigning in the unconscious world and regulated by the generalization and symmetry principles, and the asymmetric logic, governing conscious thought. The developments of Matte Blanco's theory may be considered as particularly relevant to the understanding of career adjustment as a product of the individual-context relationship. Supported by the construct of affective symbolization as emotional connotation and a sense-making process, beyond cognitive, intentional and rational meanings, the bi-logic theory of mind seems to be very fertile in explaining the relationship with work contexts and in better grasping career construction paths (Langher et al. 2014). Bi-logic can account for the obvious, although uncontrollable, irrationality in choices that individuals make about their career, such as missing favorable opportunities, or approaching a job interview as if it were a test at the primary or secondary school, or procrastinating beyond any reasonable time, and so on. What is irrational can be given meaning according to the affective symbolization an individual has regarding certain situations: a favorable opportunity can be symbolized as the betrayal toward a father who was never able to work it out, a job interview

can be symbolized as the terrible moment when you feel like a judged, fragile and vulnerable child, etc.

Object relations theory seems to be one of the most advantageous approaches in order to understand unconscious determinants of vocational choice (Malach-Pines and Yafe-Yanai 1999), work motivation (Solem 1974) and organizational dynamics (Diamond, Allcorn, and Stein 2004). Consistently with object relations theory, vocational choices are intended as internalized “objects” and “object relations” that reflect the individual’s personal and familial history (Malach-Pines and Yafe-Yanai 1999). Besides, work can be conceived as a symbolic good object because the relationship with it secures for us the sense that our vitality has a place in the inter-psyche world (Levine 2010); as well, vocations reveal the self’s need to repair internal objects via the choice of a profession (Bohoslavsky 1977). Our goal in work is to realize the good we have inside in a world of others, making good exists at two levels: on the first it is the good object itself; on the second it is the good self that can result from repairing the object and the relationship of the self to it (Levine 2010). Besides this, the construct of reparation seems to be relevant in a large amount of vocational and career pieces of research (Bohoslavsky 1977; Millan et al. 2005; Ruprecht 2004) as a motivational frame that consents to widen and further develop the notion of sublimation, intended as gratification of destructive impulses, within the object relations theory.

Matte Blanco’s bi-logic theory of mind

Ignacio Matte Blanco was an outstanding Chilean psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, who provided notable contributions to the epistemological status of psychoanalysis starting from the Freudian theoretical framework. The main contribution by Matte Blanco, published in the celebrated work entitled “Unconscious as Infinite Sets: An Essay on Bi-logic” (1975), has been focused on the ambitious intention of analyzing unconscious logic through rational thought. To do this, Matte Blanco moved from a structural model consisting in Id, Super-ego and Ego as different parts of psychic apparatus (Freud 1961) to the first Freudian topographical model of mind conceiving unconscious, preconscious and conscious as systems of mind (Freud 1953).

Retrieving the first Freudian topographical model of mind

According to Freud’s latter conception of mind (structural model), the Ego, that is understood as the conscious individual, is driven by the Id and