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The journal is published in partnership with the CDI twice a year and is available both in print and online (Print ISSN 2046-1348; Online ISSN 2059-4879). Institutional subscription (online only) costs: £120 (plus VAT where applicable). Annual print subscription costs £30 UK, £35 Europe outside UK or £40 outside Europe, including postage. Individual online subscription costs £25 (plus VAT where applicable).

Membership of NICEC is also available (£75 pa or £50 pa for full-time students). Members receive the journal, free attendance at NICEC events and other benefits.

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The *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling* is published in partnership with the CDI by: National Institute for Career Education and Counselling (NICEC), The Lodge, Cheerbrook Road, Willaston, Nantwich CW5 7EN.

[www.nicec.org](http://www.nicec.org)

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# Listening to new voices in the career development field

This issue of the NICEC journal presents the work of a number of 'early career researchers'. The term 'early career researcher' can be a difficult one in a field such as career development where relatively few people begin to research until they are already well into their own careers. Many of our authors have a history as practitioners of various kinds, which provides context and inspiration for their decision to begin to undertake research and publish. However, all of the lead contributors to this issue represent new voices that are beginning to shape the career development field through their research and writing.

By explicitly giving space to new voices in the field NICEC aims both to support the growth of the individuals participating in the issue and to showcase new ideas, theories and approaches. The current historical moment is characterised by technological change, political instability, global inequality and of course Covid-19. Everywhere we look our world is changing and the possibilities for career and for the provision of career education and guidance are changing with it. Because of this it is vital that we continue to search for new theories and listen to new voices in the field.

The editors for this issue came together through the European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC). We are Danish, English, Finnish and South African and sometimes resident in Norway and Switzerland as well as the above countries. The issue was therefore an exercise in international collaboration. It has its origins somewhere amidst summer school debates about career theory and research methods in the heat of the island of Malta during the 6th ECADOC summer school. But it developed further in Copenhagen at the *Critical perspectives on agency and social justice in transition and career development* conference organised by the Nordic Network on Transitions, Career and Guidance (NoRNet). As the editorial team was finalised we shifted from working at the periphery of European conferences and began to collaborate online. By the time the editing was beginning in earnest we were

confined to our houses by Covid-19 and learning to work together through Zoom and other online tools.

We invited papers from new researchers in the field on *any* subject related to career development. We welcomed submissions from different research traditions (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods and conceptual) and invited contributors to explore career and career education and guidance across the life-course. We were overwhelmed by interest and were able to select the most interesting and high-quality submissions that we received. Submissions were selected based on any of the following criteria: 1) the innovativeness of the research presented; 2) evidence of collaboration either at national or international level; and 3) whether the research addressed issues of diversity and inclusivity.

Before we introduce the articles in this issue, we will briefly provide some words about the ECADOC programme and the challenges of being an early career researcher in the field of career guidance and counselling.

## The European Doctoral Programme in Career Guidance and Counselling (ECADOC)<sup>1</sup>

ECADOC brings together doctoral candidates working on career and career guidance from higher education institutions across Europe and beyond. This initiative embeds early career researchers in a supportive research community and encourages them to develop high quality and ethically sound career and guidance related research in Europe and across the world.

ECADOC was co-funded by the European Commission under the Lifelong Learning Programme from October 2013 to November 2016. The vision was to set up a sustainable European Doctoral Programme

<sup>1</sup> For more information on ECADOC please visit <http://www.larios.fisppa.unipd.it/ecadoc/>

specialising in career guidance and counselling research. ECADOC network members and alumni come from more than 30 European countries and beyond. The initiative is backed by all of the main organisations supporting career guidance research internationally including the Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe (NICE), the European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counseling (ESVDC), the International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance (IAEVG), the network of career counseling and guidance programs at higher education institution in the Nordic and Baltic countries (VALA), the Nordic network for Research on Transitions, Career and Guidance (NoRNet) and Euroguidance. These bodies and a range of national organisational and research groups help to recruit participants to the programme each year.

ECADOC's core activity is the organisation of an annual summer school that brings together researchers from across Europe and beyond. The summer school typically takes the form of a one-week doctoral course containing lectures, workshops and an innovative approach to mentored peer learning called 'collective academic supervision' (Nordentoft, Thomsen, & Wichmann-Hansen, 2013). The summer schools include opportunities for PhD candidates to work with internationally renowned career guidance researchers, practitioners, and policy makers, as well as the editors of several journals. The summer school creates an opportunity for the organising committees to offer focused lectures on specific research themes, methods and ethics in career research in collaboration with the leading international scholars in the community. ECADOC has also offered a space where participants have been able to 'find each other' and connect around their mutual research themes and interests, resulting in fruitful discussions and joint international research projects.

Following the end of European Commission funding for ECADOC, the network of European higher education institutions engaged in the programme continued to organise the yearly ECADOC Doctoral summer school on a voluntary basis. Even Covid could not put a stop to the network with the organising team at Jönköping University in Sweden, led by Dr. Ingela Bergmo-Prvulovic, transforming the 2020 ECADOC summer school into an online event. Although researchers were unable to come together in Sweden, they were able to continue to exchange information and ideas and

build a community between early stage researchers and more experienced scholars. This exchange and network building lies at the heart of ECADOC and all scholars are encouraged reach out to each other for collaboration, support and feedback in order to advance our field of research as a community of scholars. ECADOC 2021 will be hosted by Napier University in Edinburgh and led by NICEC's own Dr. Pete Robertson.

ECADOC has also facilitated and enabled participants to build other forms of collaboration. These include joint conference symposia such as the early stage researchers' symposia that have taken place at the International Association of Educational and Vocational Guidance conference, collaborative publications like the *New perspectives on career counseling and guidance in Europe* book (Cohen-Scali, Nota, & Rossier, 2018) including Weber et al.'s (2018) development of a future research agenda for the field. This issue of the NICEC journal is the latest example of the kind of international, cross-disciplinary collaboration that ECADOC seeks to foster.

We encourage early career researchers to seek out information about ECADOC and how to participate in summer schools and be part of the international and diverse academic community. And we encourage experienced career researchers to actively look at the outcomes of ECADOC and engage in the discussion on the topics raised by early career researchers. We also encourage more established researchers to offer to host a future summer school.

## Early career researchers in the careers field

Being an early career researcher comes with quite a few career-related issues. The working conditions for early career researchers are often characterised by precarious employment with few opportunities for advancement (Courtois, & O'Keefe, 2015; Herschberg, Benschop, & Van den Brink, 2018). This general problem is exacerbated for researchers working in a small, interdisciplinary field like careers where the number of full-time and permanent academic roles is very limited.

Many careers researchers find themselves in broader academic groups like lifelong learning, education, work-life studies, sociology, or psychology with only a

few colleagues who share their interest in career and career guidance. In this situation it can be hard to find people to talk to about your work and your research interests. The ECADOC network has sought to address this by forming an international community of like-minded individuals in the careers field. It provides participants with social and professional connections and solidarity and gives them close colleagues with the same academic preoccupation and theoretical field. These relationships endure beyond the immediate interaction of the summer school and lead to people becoming close colleagues, sparring partners, collaborators and constructive critics even when they live in different countries. This is a huge strength for the coming generation of career researchers that this network has been built already very early in their career.

ECADOC has shown that the number of doctoral students in the field is higher than ever and growing continuously. This is something that we celebrate as it contributes to a vibrant research culture and increases the capacity for research, evaluation, and the development of new theory. But, simultaneously, for those individuals pursuing a research career within the field it raises the question of how it is possible to create a successful career which enables them to make use of their skills and knowledge whilst also securing decent pay and conditions. For some this is about thinking about how they can forge a research career path outside of the traditional setting of universities and research institutions. In this sense, ECADOC can also be one potential networking platform to enable unconventional career steps or moves.

## About this issue

As stated earlier, for this issue of the NICEC Journal we invited papers from new researchers on any subject related to career development. In the following section, we will give a short introduction and some insights into the articles making up this issue. They are presented in their order of appearance. They represent different research traditions, look into various phenomena and concepts within career development, and come from various geographical locations across the globe. The articles selected for publication reflect some of the most topical issues in the field: how career guidance could reach out to people in disadvantaged and marginal positions; how we could think through ‘social

justice lenses’ in career guidance; how changes in the labour market structures could affect young people’s entries to working life and how families, communities and broader cultural contexts come to frame the enactment of careers for different individuals.

In the first article, **Anouk J. Albien** takes on the important question of how career development interventions can lead to lasting changes. In her article, she explores how life-design career counselling supports change in a group of disadvantaged South African adolescents. Drawing on a qualitative post-intervention evaluation of the adolescents’ participation in the intervention, she shows how it elicited long-term changes in career development and facilitated reflective processes. She ends the article by discussing the implications of this for both research and practice.

Next, **Jeanine van Halteren** reflects critically on guidance interventions for the marginalised. She presents findings from her small-scale exploratory study into the lives and careers of survivors of contemporary slavery. Through the analyses of various data produced in the project, such as field notes, interviews and visual data van Halteren arrives at C.A.R.E. – connection, engagement, acknowledgment and respect – as key elements in delivering meaningful and context-sensitive support into the lives and careers of people considered ‘marginal’.

In their article, **Petra Elftorp and Lucy Hearne** bring another ‘marginal voice’ to the discussion on careers and career interventions, focusing on experiences of adults with dyslexia. The authors draw from Axel Honneth’s conceptions of recognition together with an interactionist and non-reductionist biopsychosocial (BPS) model of disability to examine adults’ experiences on dyslexia from a social justice point of view. Elftorp and Hearne analyse experiences of misrecognition and transformative experiences of recognition and offer some valuable implications for both individual and collective career guidance practices.

**Esther Galfalvi, Tristram Hooley and Siobhan Neary** explore whether young people use or expect to use the gig economy for their careers. The size of the so-called ‘gig’ economy, working mediated through online platforms such as Uber or Ebay, is increasing globally each year. Drawing on interviews with young people age 16-19, the authors discuss how young people in England perceive the gig economy

and whether they feel that it will be relevant to their careers, with a view to discussing if the gig economy should be included in careers education programmes or guidance.

**Mara Šimunović, Iva Šverko, and Toni Babarović** discuss how the recognition of parental career-specific behaviours as well as parents' understandings of the potential benefit of these behaviours could facilitate their children's career adaptability. Implications for special counselling interventions are provided for students who perceive that their parents are not providing enough career-related support. These address the gap that exists between parents and their children in understandings of the world-of-work.

The next article comes from **Emily Róisín Reid** who originally wrote it in response to the NICEC Bill Law Memorial Award. In the article Emily looks at how Law's (1981) Community Interaction Theory helps to explain the career journeys of medical students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. She argues that Law's perspective remains relevant to the endeavour of widening participation to higher education and suggests that guidance practitioners have an important role to play as applied psychologists and sociologists.

**Deborah Crook** presents an example of rights-based research in her article, where she addresses what kind of perspectives young people in northwest England have about enablers and barriers to continued education. She has applied participatory methods for young people to imagine steps towards future possible selves, including collaborative story-making with researchers. As an outcome, she questions models of aspiration-raising that prioritise particular trajectories, and emphasises the importance of inter-generational relationships, and especially the role and support of significant adults in the lives of young people.

The last article in this edition is an elaboration of a career counselling intervention within the Life Design paradigm applied in the collectivist cultural context of urban India. **Aparna Bhalla and Gill Frigerio** provide a critical engagement with different career counselling methods and their theoretical underpinnings through an exploration of them with two clients. They use a step-by-step method to assess their usefulness in this collectivistic context and what implications these findings could have in facilitating the career transitions and trajectories for Indian clients,

whose career needs are unique and culturally informed.

We hope that these articles provide proof of the ongoing innovativeness of our field. At the same time, we hope they will be a source of inspiration and offer an insight into the latest trends and ideas within career development research. Enjoy reading of these articles and listening to these new voices!

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Anouk J. Albien, Bo Klindt Poulsen,  
Sanna Toivainen, Miika Kekki &  
Tristram Hooley, Editors

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# Career counselling with life design in a collectivist cultural context: An action research study

Aparna Bhalla & Gill Frigerio

**Large-scale** macro forces are restructuring forms of work in urban India creating the need for alternative methods of career counselling. This research explores the application of a US-based approach to constructing careers i.e. Life-Design Career Counseling (i.e., LDC) with two mid-career professionals in India. Data consisted of client responses to different narrative career counselling exercises such as a lifeline activity, a career construction interview and semi-structured feedback interviews. Action research's focus on reflexivity helped integrate theory with practice to contribute to knowledge production and meaningful innovations within practice. Findings from this research underscored the importance of relationship, reflection and sense-making and the need for India to utilise a culturally resonant career intervention. The study holds value for career professionals, in India and beyond where LDC is still unexplored. Moreover, LDC practitioners in non-Western countries and collectivist societies will benefit from a contextual adaptation that encourages focus on client learning.



## Introduction

Traditionally, India is a collectivist society. Whilst globalization and technology are restructuring urban India's career outlook, there exist deeply rooted beliefs that could prevent its populace from flourishing within this dynamic context. Gideon Arulmani's research provides insights into career guidance in the Indian context. It illustrates Indian adolescents' lack of awareness regarding self and the world of work,

and the strong influence of perceptions regarding prestige and status on career development (Arulmani & Nag, 2006). These career beliefs are passed on from parents, family and community traditions leading to an age-old belief system wherein the focus for many Indians becomes obtaining qualifications and employment rather than lifelong learning and building career resilience (Mehta, 2013; Ubba, 2016). Career counselling in India is unstructured and dominated by private provision from organizations and individuals. The approach to counselling is predominantly psychometric and prescriptive in orientation, with a focus on information provision and subject selection (Arulmani, 2007). It is rooted in the ancient Indian tradition wherein the counsellor (or religious head in the past) is seen as a guide, and the client with family, expect to be 'told' about the best career (Arulmani, 2011a).

Career development theories designed to inform practice have largely been developed in western contexts and may have limited applicability in India (Arulmani 2011a, b; Arulmani & Nag, 2006). Indian career counselling is still largely about matching and constructivist techniques are yet to be explored extensively. Some attempts have been made by Bakshi and Satish (2015) and Arulmani's (2011a) 'Jiva' approach which combines contemporary career concepts with Indian epistemology and culture. Encouraging the 'cultural preparedness' approach, Arulmani (2011b) acknowledges that career development occurs under the influence of a wide range of factors. Family, social structure, economic climate, and political orientations, together create an environment in which attitudes and opinions are formed about occupations and career. Career interventions need to attend to all of these factors if they are to be effective. The aim of this

action-research study is to explore the application of the US-originated Life Design Counselling to this Indian collectivist context to determine its suitability for future integration.

## Theoretical Overview

Life Design Counselling (LDC) has been developed for the 21st century occupational landscape, commonly described as 'VUCA' - volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (Savickas, 2015b). Advanced through a multinational collaboration, the LDC framework implements theories of self-construction (Guichard, 2005) and career construction (Savickas, 2005). LDC's administration has been explored within diverse client groups (varied age groups, clients with disabilities and marginalized sections of society) from Western countries. There are a few studies that examine the effectiveness of LCD and Maree (2013) is one example of the exploration of its diversity. Tien (2015) discusses multicultural issues in LDC with application to the generalised Eastern context and the research presented here further adds to the subject by highlighting nuanced realities that define Indian culture. Tien makes pertinent points about gender, drawing attention to the relevance of Indian society's patriarchal outlook where often families wish for a son to propagate their business and perpetuate their pre-conceived professional legacy. For example, engineers and lawyers 'inherit' their careers from fathers/ grandfathers or family businesses are expected to be inherited and expanded. This outlook adds to the societal pressure on Indian adolescent boys and also on girls that belong to families without male progeny. Following a consideration of these cultural factors, we now will discuss the Life-Design Counselling framework in more detail.

The Life-Design Counselling (LDC) framework comprises of the Career Construction Interview (CCI), designed to elicit a client's life story as a series of micro-stories. These are later consolidated by the client and counsellor to co-create a psychological life-portrait that provides an autobiographical narrative of the client's central life-theme. The life-portrait is then used to prompt the client to move intentionally towards enacting self in life/career. LDC's aim is to increase clients' adaptability, narratability, intentionality

and reflexivity. Achievement of these goals help clients thrive within their changing environment, articulate their life-career story in their own language, purposefully shape their life-career story and increase their contemplative awareness and understanding about their own lives and career development (Hartung & Vess, 2016).

Life-Design Counseling has been criticised for its lack of orientation towards social justice and career learning (Patton & Watson, 2015). Watson (2013) has critically examined core tenets of Career Construction Theory and their relevance for non-western and developing contexts. He recommends practitioners to theoretically adapt to contexts where: the clients' cultural frame of reference is collectivistic; the language used has different connotations; and career oppressive contexts challenge the meaning of constructing a self within the work role. These aspects, along with Arulmani's recommendations for a cultural preparedness approach, have been addressed via theoretical triangulation elsewhere (Bhalla, 2019), but are beyond the scope of this article.

The present study implemented a hybrid approach to Life-Design Counseling by combining CCI with a lifeline. This activity retains focus on the client while facilitating in-depth self-reflection. Visually, it is helpful in mapping the occupational plot (Savickas, 2011) and identifying the client's life-theme. The use of appropriate questioning further aids the understanding of the client's salient life-roles.

## Research Methodology

The research questions were derived from the aim and purpose of the study and framed to follow the Action Research (AR) cycle of plan-act-review-to plan again. These are:

- (RQ1):** How can I conduct a successful LDC intervention with mid-career professionals in India?
- (RQ2):** What are the strengths and weaknesses of the intervention?
- (RQ3):** What are the recommendations for my services?

## Sampling/ Participants

Data collection consisted of audio recorded interviews with clients, real-time notes made during the CCI and observations recorded in an electronic reflective journal. The participants were recruited via email from the counsellor's existing client network in India. As a result, four candidates responded. However due to time constraints only two candidates were able to participate in the research. Although the sample was only a small number, rich insights were yielded from feedback interviews consisting of a pre-determined set of open-ended questions. Whilst a larger sample would be needed to ensure data saturation, the depth of insights from the small number of participants was deemed appropriate given the clear constructivist epistemological position of both the research project and the LDC framework itself.

In order to respect the rights and dignity of research subjects, pseudonyms have been used to refer to clients and any other identifying text has been altered. Jane (female 24 years old) was managing her forty-year old family-owned retail business of sports equipment. She was contemplating an international Masters and seeking clarity whether she should pursue what she is 'good at professionally' or what she 'enjoyed personally'. She identified Sports Management as an ideal career path because she loved sports and enjoyed leadership but wanted reaffirmation. Personally, Jane enjoyed creative writing, but considered it too subjective and a risk professionally. She was one of three daughters living in a multi-generational extended family unit which was strict and conservative. They (especially her father) believed in the dignity of self-employment and she was influenced by this view.

Drew (male 25 years old) was a culinary professional who had recently left his job at a renowned coffee-chain as head-chef due to dissatisfaction with the environment and supervisor. Drew had a history of not enjoying studies unless they 'made sense, were logical and had practical application'. During school and college, he left his studies midway because he did not see merit in what was being taught. Drew had recently attended his sister's graduation at a prestigious institution in Spain and was doubtful whether he should pursue the same MBA, because as he stated in the interview 'Drew and studies don't go together'.

## Procedure

The following four steps were conducted over two client meetings and constituted the response to RQ1.

1. Introduction to the nature and purpose of this study followed by the opening question of CCI (see Table 1 below).
2. Lifeline activity to ascertain the life-theme from client's life story. Significant positive and negative career/ life events were plotted on a line graph. Subsequently, the remainder of the CCI was conducted.
3. In the time between the first and second meetings, the life-portrait was constructed using a staged process (Maree, 2013; Savickas, 2011; 2015a, b).
4. The second session was initiated with the question - 'Has anything become clearer to you since our last meeting?'. Thereafter, the life-portrait was discussed and any beliefs that needed to be redressed were negotiated. After confirming achievement of mutually agreed counselling goals, each client wrote a mission statement or success formula. The intervention was concluded by conducting a semi-structured feedback interview.

To address RQ2, the data was explored to assess the strengths and weaknesses of LDC with Indian clients. In RQ3, the inferences drawn from the first two questions were examined to make recommendations for practice. After completion of all three stages with the first client, the entire cycle was repeated for the second client. The counsellor utilized multiple frameworks for evaluation (see Table 2. below). This article is limited to the use of the triadic lens, which comprises of LDC's core elements in order to summarize evaluation and to make recommendations for practice.

For assessment of CCI responses, Savickas (2011) advocates identifying the client's script from their favourite story, to learn which cultural tales clients reproduce. Clients adopt these scripts from the master narrative their communities provide, and knowing a culture means knowing its standard stories. The lead author's knowledge of the client and



**Table 1. Career Construction Interview Content**

QUESTION	PURPOSE
How can I be useful to you through this session?	Elicit counselling goals to set the <b>scene</b>
Who did you admire when you were growing up? List three heroes / role-models.	Character traits portray the <b>self</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What attracts you to your favourite magazines or television shows?</li> <li>b. Favourite subjects</li> <li>c. Favourite subjects</li> <li>d. Hobbies</li> </ul>	Indicated manifest interests/settings and preferred work <b>stages</b> to enact self
What is your current favourite story?	Storyline provides a <b>script</b> for linking self to setting
Tell me your favourite saying or motto?	Self-advice offers support strategies and <b>solution</b> for constructing next episode in the story
What is your earliest recollection?	Early memories give <b>perspective</b> on current problem

**Table 2. Details of the Interpretive Framework**

Analysis Phase	Focus Area	The Multiple Lenses Utilized for Data Analysis	Answers Research Question (RQ)
Stage 1	LDC Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Client*</li> <li>2) Autobiographical/Practitioner</li> <li>3) Life-Design Counseling (Goals)</li> <li>4) Additional Career Theories (Holland, Law &amp; Krumboltz)</li> </ul>	RQ 1
Stage 2	LDC Process (4 stages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Construction</li> <li>2) Deconstruction</li> <li>3) Reconstruction</li> <li>4) Co-construction</li> </ul>	RQ 2
Stage 3	LDC Key Components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Relationship</li> <li>2) Reflection</li> <li>3) Sense-Making</li> </ul>	RQ 3

\*Adapted from Brookfield's (2017) four lens reflective model.

counsellor's common master narrative prompted two modifications to the LDC process. First was the decision to omit the list of suitable occupations in Jane's life-portrait. Second, in view of LDC's narratability goal, the client's ability to recite the new story to audiences was restricted to the counsellor. This is because in India, for most part of an individual's life, he/she is financially supported by their parents. Their life/career goals are considered the family's goals. Declaring any deviation from the original plan, as decided with parents is considered a sign of disrespect. The utilization of an alternative audience for this purpose is discussed later.

## Results

Life-Design Counselling's core elements are relationship, reflection and sense-making. A collaborative relationship provides a safe space and holding environment wherein counsellors prompt self-reflection and sense-making to produce intentionality. Several instances during Jane and Drew's LDC interventions pointed towards the requirement for a stronger working alliance. For example, during CCI Jane mentioned 'feeling creepy', indicating she wasn't expecting to identify a pattern within her responses to the lifeline and CCI. Also, after the first session, Drew's comment 'I don't know what will emerge from this discussion, but I thoroughly enjoyed the conversation' indicated lack of clarity about LDC process and purpose.

The lifeline exercise elicited a rich transition narrative. Nevertheless, further scope for reflection was identified. Savickas (2011) recommends practitioners help clients acknowledge how transition 'feels' to them as they prepare to enter a new story. During the feedback interview, Jane mentioned going through 'a gamut of emotions,' whereas, Drew's emotional experience was restricted to early recollections. Deeper reflection could have helped Drew recognize the emotional connection between his current situation and early recollections, to facilitate the acknowledgement of his life theme. There was, however, a noticeable change in Drew's body language at this stage. As the narrated life-portrait revealed intrinsic details, Drew's posture changed from interestedly leaning forward to leaning back

and crossing his arms. He maintained this posture throughout the remainder of the session, deflecting any attempts to address his beliefs. This could have been due to Drew's generally restrained personality or due to the element of culture with gender, wherein he felt uncomfortable coming across as vulnerable to a female counsellor. It indicated that Drew was potentially unprepared for LDC's psychodynamic approach.

Both clients described LDC as a positive experience. As Jane bid a final goodbye she held up the mission statement and said: 'This gives me hope'. Whereas, Drew said: 'I would have preferred some critical feedback, as it signifies scope for improvement'. This is evident of the client's lack of career confidence or self-esteem as a result of community influence, which is a common feature of India's collectivist context. Also, at the end of their respective interventions, both clients' said they knew the answer to their transition query. This is a key principle of LDC, which was explained to both clients - that the solution lies within them. Although Jane acknowledged the role of LDC, Drew nonchalantly stated knowing everything beforehand.

Life-Design Counseling makes clients become fully aware of how they articulate salient life roles in relation to some major future expectations. Counsellors then encourage clients to find ways to achieve these expectations, such as defining priorities, identifying support, cultivating resources, and engaging in activities. Counsellor's awareness regarding the role of gender in Indian culture helped identify Jane's attempts to balance her child/daughter role (and related expectations) and worker role, with the leisurite role. This was confirmed while assessing her transition narrative (mentioned love for sports) with her list of hobbies (did not feature sports). In case of Drew, the MBA seemed to be a family legacy he wanted to take forward, more than a course of interest. This aligns with the cultural context, where extended family dynamics and domestic arrangements mean that is fairly common for children and their achievements to be compared with their cousins to encourage progress. Correspondingly, self-esteem issues with Drew were identified based on him admitting that he runs away from appreciation, suggesting advantages to using strength building exercises with Indian clients.

## Recommendations for Practice

A key component of the counselling relationship is a strong working alliance, which creates the foundation for an effective counselling intervention. Even while setting goals and describing tasks, counsellors establish the working alliance by eliciting emotions and offering comfort (Savickas, 2011). But in India, not everyone is comfortable articulating emotions. Therefore, while screening and contracting, clients need to be informed that to draw maximum benefit from LDC, they should be willing to engage with their emotions.

Compatibility between counsellor and client beliefs and expectations is also crucial to strengthening the working alliance (Cardozo, 2015). LDC is a new form of career intervention for Indian clients habituated to a prescriptive approach. Therefore client expectations should be addressed before initiating LDC. Counsellors need to establish a collaborative partnership, while emphasizing that clients are the sole experts on their lives and encourage them to actively analyse their micro-stories. Apprehensions about the value of this can be addressed by emphasising LDC's aim to empower clients with tools for lifelong career management and decision-making.

In order to enhance shared construction by the client and counsellor, scope for further client reflection and self-examination was identified. Maree (2013) recommends that counsellors repeatedly read client responses back to them and request clients to authorize and validate (or invalidate) the counsellor's interpretations. When clients believe that they are being heard and feel validated, they reflect more deeply on their career narratives. In this manner, validity, credibility and trustworthiness can be established to further strengthen the working alliance and facilitate sense-making.

Comprehension of the client's own narrative identities emerges from dialogue (Savickas, 2011). Through effective dialogue, the counsellor needs to induce a concrete experience (Kolb, 1984). Only if the experience is sufficiently concrete will it be suitable for construction, or bring forth the client's thoughts, beliefs and emotions for reflective self-examination and deconstruction in the subsequent stage. This leads to another important aspect to be considered while

setting client expectations and prompting reflection i.e., having confidence in the concept of 'bricolage'.

Savickas (2015b) describes bricolage as constructing something new from whatever is at hand. As practitioners prompt reflection through CCI, they should further inquire about the cultural plots and metaphors that the client has used to articulate his or her most profound concerns and fundamental truth. These elements work as source material for biographical bricolage, wherein the counsellor engages the client in a dialogue with these sources of their own self, to rearrange them and direct client decision making. The lifeline activity provides wider scope for biographical bricolage and should be utilized intelligently. Thoughtful questioning by the counsellor will facilitate reflection and self-awareness, while CCI and lifeline will represent the scaffolding for self-assembly and reassembly (Savickas, 2015b).

After building any structure, the builder views it from all four sides to get an overall assessment. Similarly during the construction stage, after constructing the concrete experience, it should be assessed from all the perspectives summarized by Savickas (2015a), as listed in Table 3. below. This multi-dimensional analysis will demonstrate what the concrete experience symbolically represents for the client, and the tension that holds it together. Therefore, for learning outcomes from a successful LDC intervention, each stage of the LDC process should be analyzed from all four perspectives before moving on to the subsequent stage.

Describing the Indian value system, Arulmani uses the term 'Dharma' reflecting porous boundaries between self and other (Arulmani, 2011). These values are highly prevalent as Indian parents believe their child's success is representative of their own success, while children perceive parental expectations as their own (Bhalla, 2017). Tien (2015) also highlights how in eastern cultures, family is a part of the whole picture for self-construction. These characteristics of collectivist societies and analysis of the two LDC interventions, call for considering life roles (and role salience) as part of LDC.

Some techniques focused on life-roles may not be suitable for an Indian context. The Life-Role Analysis,

**Table 3. Four Phases of Life-Design Counseling Process**

<b>Client Experience</b>	<b>Life Designing</b>	<b>Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)</b>	<b>Client Operations (Watson &amp; Rennie, 1994)</b>
<b>Tension</b>	Construct	Concrete Experience	Symbolic Representation
<b>Attention</b>	Deconstruct	Reflective Observation	Reflexive self-examination
<b>Intention</b>	Reconstruct	Abstract Conceptualization	New Realizations
<b>Extension</b>	Co-Construct	Active Experimentation	Revisoning Self

wherein clients examine costs and benefits of the culturally defined and gender-based role expectations they picked-up based on parental messages and those garnered from media and society, may be perceived as disrespectful towards families and culture. Therefore, administering the Life-Space Map (Brott, 2005) may be more suitable. Thereby, the concept of life roles can be explored through the Life-Space Map, where clients are given a blank sheet of paper and asked to draw a circle representing them. Additional circles representing other people are also drawn with a double ring around those related to the presenting problem. These circles are drawn on paper in a spatial relationship to the client (i.e., close, overlapping and distant) with the counsellor providing exploratory prompts.

In this research, both clients volunteered information on their short, medium and long term goals indicating the increasing clarity of their intentions. However, further facilitated action and planning (with sense-making) is recommended using the future-focused, extended lifeline exercise (Brott, 2005). On a lifeline exercise sheet, clients can mark their life goals and related events with tentative future dates. This future-focused lifeline can be placed onto the previous lifeline, to demonstrate the client's life theme extending into the future. Thereafter, counsellor and client can discuss the values, beliefs and steps required for the achievement of those goals and their match with the client's mission statement.

Savickas (2015a) emphasizes the role of audience in achieving the goal of narratability and facilitating action. He states that sharing their re-authored stories with important audiences is a critical component of the client's action plan. Clients need to secure validation of relevant audiences and marshal social resources towards performances of new roles. Indian clients consider parents the most important audience, yet they are uncomfortable sharing their mission statement with them. Savickas (2015a) emphasizes that counsellors should encourage clients to ground their new stories in a secure base by narrating it to an audience outside of the counselling session. Briddickk and Sensoy-Briddickk (2013) recommend helping the client recruit 'known', 'imaginary' or 'introduced' audiences for his purpose.

Tien (2015) recommends strength-centred career counselling for Asian clients. Her suggestion to encourage clients to think positively is highly relevant because doing well is considered a child's obligation. Instead of rejoicing in their strengths, family and relatives tend to compare their child's achievements to his/her peers and children of their peers with shortcomings as a focal point of discussion. Drew's inability to accept appreciation, expecting criticism from the counsellor and his lack of career confidence reflect this common trend. Hence, strength building exercises would be highly recommended for clients within a collectivist context.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this current research study, one can conclude that Life-Design Counseling can be an effective career intervention for the Indian context. However, for LDC to be successful, practitioners need to focus on instilling confidence in their clients and empowering them to find the solution situated within them. From the cultural perspective, it was found that for India's collectivist value system, the exploration of the concept of life roles through reflection may significantly contribute to the overall LDC experience. Practitioners who are familiar with the client's cultural orientation and outlook are certainly at an advantage while counselling. However, counsellors who lack knowledge of the cultural script followed in countries with a collectivist orientation can utilize the concept of life-roles to understand and acknowledge the client's context. In this manner, practitioners can demonstrate empathy and administer a culturally resonant career intervention.

This qualitative study is the first inquiry into Life-Design Career Counseling within the Indian context. It should be noted, this study is based on AR conducted with a small volunteer sample (i.e., two clients) and extensive review of LDC and related literature. Whilst we are not generalizing that the conclusions in this research are applicable to the entire urban population of India, the detailed and rich account of the clients and practitioner experience is appealing to the concept of transferability. This means that what has been researched in this study will be of interest to other researchers interested in Life-Design Counseling and will add to the literature on LDC applicability.



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