Development of the Life Project Reflexivity Scale: A New Career Intervention Inventory

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Abstract

This article describes the *Life Project Reflexivity Scale* (*LPRS*), a questionnaire constructed for use with Italian students to assess the development of reflexivity, which is increasingly vital for personal and professional progress and well-being. The instrument was administered to 502 Italian university students. A three-dimensional version of the scale was identified through exploratory factor analysis and supported by confirmatory factor analysis. Inter-item factor and scale correlations and reliability coefficients were calculated. We concluded that evidence supports the reliability and validity of the LPRS as a useful instrument for measuring life project reflexivity (people's reflexivity regarding their future career–life–personal projects) in the Italian context. In addition to sound psychometric properties, the LPRS takes little time to administer and can be completed in large group settings with relative ease. More research is needed to more fully assess its validity and its potential for use in other countries.

Keywords: life project reflexivity, clarity, projectuality, authenticity, acquiescence, psychometric properties, Life Project Reflexivity

Postmodern work contexts today are characterized by rapid change, fluidity, lack of security, and instability (Guichard, 2013; International Labor Organization, 2016). Some analysts suggest that the fourth industrial revolution (marked by artificial intelligence, robotics, nanotechnology, biotechnology, and connectivity) will contribute to increased work instability, scarcity, and widening social and economic inequality (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014; Standing, 2014). Schwab (2016) maintains, for example, that the growing rift between "low-skill/low-pay and high-skill/high-pay career segments" (p. 4) will precipitate heightened social

tensions. Workers are consequently facing numerous work-related challenges and work transitions (Savickas, 2011), as the prospect of engaging in a stable work environment across one's work life is rapidly disappearing (Savickas, 2014). In the 21st century, careers belong to the people executing them rather than to the organizations in which they work (Duarte, 2004). Increasingly, workers themselves, rather than the organizations that employ them, are regarded as responsible for their personal and professional career–life trajectories (Guichard, 2013).

Against this background, the emphasis on career counseling and the study of vocational behavior has shifted from guiding and counseling people on career development to enabling them to manage their careers and their lives (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2015; Savickas, 2013). Thus, the main challenge is no longer to help people make sound career or work-related decisions but to help them define who and what they want to become in work and across their lives more broadly (Di Fabio, 2017; Di Fabio & Maree, 2012; Savickas, 2014). This changing career counseling approach emphasizes the need to guide clients in clarifying their identities in order to help them construct and carry out meaningful personal and professional projects (Guichard, 2009).

In this regard, Savickas (2011) emphasizes the importance of reflection and reflexivity as central components of career counseling intervention dialogue. Reflexivity develops through processes of narratability and biographicity and facilitates the clarification and construction of life stories (Maree, 2013). Reflexivity is an important intervention tool by which people discover meaning in their stories and narratives, identify authentic aspects of the self, and design personal and professional life projects that offer meaning in the context of an uncertain and shifting work landscape. We use the term life project reflexivity to describe people's capacity to reflect on and take the steps needed to tackle current and future work and life projects. Reflexivity is an active and continuous process through which individuals reach self-awareness by balancing aspects of one's present, past, and future (Di Fabio & Maree, 2016; Finlay & Gough, 2003; Maree, 2013). This process should optimally assist individuals in identifying life projects that are characterized by clarity, are based on authentic aspects of the self, and offer meaning, and thereby advance their personal and professional lives and ultimately their well-being (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2016b).

Given the centrality of life project reflexivity for career counseling and life design research and practice, this study seeks to further the development of the recently constructed *Life Project Reflexivity Scale* (*LPRS*; Di Fabio, 2015) through examination of its psychometric properties and verification of it factor structure with a larger sample of university students. We begin by elaborating on the theoretical bases of reflexivity in career counseling intervention dialogue with an emphasis on how the intervention processes of narratability, biographicity, and reflexivity can contribute to clarity, authenticity (AU), and meaning in the identification of life projects.

Strengthening Narrative Identity to Promote Reflexivity

Narrative or dialogic interventions help people to reflect on and narrate their personal and professional career–life stories (Savickas, 2014). As part of these interventions, narratability, biographicity, and reflexivity (Guichard, 2009, 2013; Savickas, 2013, 2014) are facilitated to help people build authentic and meaningful futures.

Narratability draws on Savickas' (2013) career construction theory and Guichard's (2013) life construction theory and enables elaboration of the career–life problem. By eliciting and promoting their narratives, people clarify their insecurities and uncertainties (Savicaks, 2005). A biographical bridge is built to facilitate the construction, deconstruction, reconstruction, coconstruction, and containing of the self. Narratability also fosters biographicity (Alheit & Daussien, 1999). By drawing on biographical agency, people can cope with transitions by attaching personal meaning to past memories, current experiences, and future aspirations and thereby identify central career–life themes (Savickas, 2014). This also serves to facilitate the clarification and integration of people's multiple selves that emerge across time and across different contexts (Guichard, 2009).

Narratability and biographicity contribute to reflexivity. Whereas reflection or reflecting (Polkinghorne, 2005) refer to thinking about something after the event has happened, reflexivity refers to a dynamic and continuous process of refining self-awareness (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Drawing on self- and identity construction bolsters this process in ways that are central to career counseling.

Drawing on Self- and Identity Construction to Promote Reflexivity, Clarity, AU, and Meaning

Processes of reflection and meta-reflection allow people to identify authentic aspects of the self and to reflect on their application for future life projects (Guichard, 2013; Maree, 2013; Savickas, 2011). Awareness of the authentic self (Di Fabio, 2014a) encompasses a sense of purpose and meaning that offers a basis for constructing authentic and meaningful future projects or plans (Di Fabio, 2014c).

Awareness of the authentic self (Di Fabio, 2014a) includes knowledge of one's intrinsic interests (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001) and goals that matter both personally and socially (Di Fabio, 2014c). The process of self-attunement (Di Fabio, 2014c; Guichard, 2013), whereby people reflect on their objective talents and potential (what I am good at) in relation to their subjective talents and potential (what energizes me, what motivates me to do something), promotes refinement of the authentic self. Self-attunement is attained when people attain clarity and are able to look at themselves objectively (considering the "objective" scores on their personal traits) as well as subjectively (considering stories about themselves that are rich in meaning) to work toward their authentic life objectives.

Guichard's (2009) perspective on the topic of self- and identity construction is encapsulated in the dynamic system of subjective identity forms (SIFs; Collin & Guichard, 2011), which also highlights the importance of AU and personal meaning in self-construction. The SIF system is described as a configuration of ways of being, acting, interacting, and dialoguing in specific settings, as well as expectations of the self and others, which are integrated in a dynamic structure. Because core SIFs are in harmony with the life domains in which people strive to achieve something of intrinsic meaning, professional careers or jobs typically constitute a key SIF in peoples' life stories, 2013.

At any given time, one (or sometimes two) SIF(s) plays or play a crucial role in the person's SIF system. Reflexivity can be a tool for helping individuals to integrate their plural identities and construct something intrinsically meaningful (Guichard, 2005). The aim of reflexivity in this regard is to enable self-perception from different perspectives, to identify objectives and future projects, and to construct

the future self (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Reflexivity constitutes the heart of (career) counseling interventions for life and career design by helping people to examine and make connections between important past and present life events and to recognize what is most meaningful in building a bridge toward the future.

Bangali and Guichard (2012) and Guichard (2013) stress the importance of reflective competence, which helps the individual to locate his or her existence within a framework that is personally rewarding and meaningful by reflecting broadly on one's career–life story and more specifically on the authentic self. The notion of reflective competence aligns with the Savickas's personal success formula (Savickas, 2011, 2014) for constructing professional projects that are personally meaningful and rewarding. This formula stresses the importance of both being acutely aware of one's personal and distinctive career-life values and for developing the abilities for dealing effectively with career–life-related challenges and transitions (Severy, 2006).

Being in touch with their authentic selves, career–life values, and life project goals equips people with the skills needed to define their life trajectories and make autonomous and responsible career–life decisions (Savickas, 2013). Autonomous decisions should be based on authentic aspects of the self rather than on what others want or pleasing others. AU is also the antithesis of self-deception and of the conscious misrepresentation of the self to please or impress others. Decisions based on the authentic self can take into consideration the needs of others as long as the authentic self is not sacrificed. The process of self-attunement (Di Fabio, 2014c) includes attention to the balance between individual and collective needs and care for self and for others. Meta-cognitive and meta-emotional processes that are facilitated by narratability, biographicity, and reflexivity can promote the attainment of authentic and meaningful awareness.

Refining Life Project Reflexivity

Whereas "knowing how to do" and "knowing how to be" have been emphasized traditionally in career development, we concur with Savickas (2013) that "knowing how to become" is increasingly pivotal in meeting ongoing career–life transitions (Di Fabio, 2014c). As presented above, reflexivity is a key tool in enabling people

to gain the clarity and awareness of the authentic aspects of the self and for knowing how to become.

In recognition of the key role of reflexivity in the development of the life project, the LPRS (Di Fabio, 2015) was developed to assess people's reflexivity regarding their future career–life projects as a tool for designing and assessing interventions in career counseling and life design. The LPRS (Di Fabio, 2015b) was developed with a sample of 293 Italian university students. The initial 21-item instrument was analyzed through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), yielding a three-factor structure that included 14 items. The three factor subscales were labeled as clarity/projectuality, AU, and acquiescence and were viewed as generally consistent with theoretical expectations. The three-factor scales demonstrated adequate internal consistency reliability, ranging from .77 to .80, with a coefficient α of .81 for the total LPRS. While the need for an assessment tool like the LPRS is clear and the results of the pilot study are promising, further research is needed to assess the psychometric properties of the newly developed scale. The goal of the current study is to advance the refinement of the LPRS measure by examining the factor structure with a different and larger sample of Italian university students and to gather further evidence to support the reliability and validity of the LRPS. The pilot study found theoretically meaningful correlations between the LPRS (three subscales and total score) and both the total score of the Authenticity Scale (AS; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008) and the total score of the meaningful life measure (MLM; Morgan & Farsides, 2009). The current study seeks to verify the factor structure of the LPRS and its construct validity based on correlations with the AS and the MLM.

We expect the factor structure to be similar to the initial LPRS and to correlate with the AS and MLM. In alignment with the review above, reflexivity should optimally contribute to the development of life projects that are clear and based on one's authentic and autonomous self and personal values that are meaningful. By being based on authentic values, life-career projects that emerge through reflexivity do not reflect passive acceptance or acquiescence to societal values in ways that are not rewarding or meaningful for the individual. Authentic life projects are thus meaningful by definition. The AS and MLM assess feelings of personal AU and meaning in life broadly, but not specifically as related to future life projects. As evidence for construct validity, we thus expect the total LPRS to be

positively correlated, but not identical, with the AS and MLM. Factors reflecting clarity and AU in life projects would also be positively correlated with AS and MLM, whereas a factor reflecting acquiescence would be inversely correlated with AS and MLM.

Method

Participants

The participants for the current study were 502 Italian university students of whom 222 (44.2%) were men and 280 (55.8%) women. The mean ages were 22.51 (total group), 22.49 (men), and 22.53 (women), and the *SD*s were 1.64 (total group), 1.54 (men), and 1.72 (women). Students were in their third and fourth years of university study.

Measures

Life project reflexivity

The pilot version of LPRS (Di Fabio, 2015) was used to evaluate people's reflexivity regarding their future projects across career, personal, and life domains. For the present study, the full 21-item measure, with some minor edits for clarity, was administered. Participants were asked to respond to each item using the following 5-point Likert-type rating scale: 5 = *strongly agree*, 4 = *agree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, and 1 = *strongly disagree*.

AU

The Italian version (Di Fabio, 2014a) of the AS (Wood et al., 2008) was used as an indicator of construct validity to assess the AU of the participants in the present study. The scale is comprised 12 items, and the participants were asked to use a 7-point Likert-type rating scale anchored by 1 (*does not describe me at all*) and 7 (*describes me very well*). A total score was calculated for AU and for the three dimensions of AU, namely, self-alienation (e.g., "I feel out of touch with the real me"), authentic living (e.g., "I stay true to myself in most situations"), and accepting external influence (e.g., "I always feel I need to do what others expect of me"). Cronbach's α coefficients for the Italian version were .80 (total scale), .81 (self-alienation), .79 (authentic living), and .84 (accepting external influences; Di

Fabio, 2014a). Construct validity of the AS is supported by positive correlation with self-esteem ($r = .34$, $p < .01$), life satisfaction ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), positive affect ($r = .36$, $p < .01$), and inverse correlations with negative affect ($r = −.47$, $p < .01$; Di Fabio, 2014a).

Meaningful life (ML)

The Italian version (Di Fabio, 2014b) of the MLM (Morgan & Farsides, 2009) was used to assess the participants' meaning in life as an indicator of construct validity for the LPRS. The measure comprises 23 items, and the participants were asked to respond using a 7-point Likert-type rating scale anchored by 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*. In addition to a total score for ML, the MLM consists of five dimensions, namely, exciting life (e.g., "Life to me seems always exciting"); accomplished life (e.g., "So far, I am pleased with what I have achieved in life"), principled life (e.g., "I have a personal value system that makes my life worthwhile"), purposeful life (e.g., "I have a clear idea of what my future goals and aims are"), and Valued life (e.g., "My life is significant"). Cronbach's α coefficients were .87 (exciting life), .86 (accomplished life), .85 (principled life), .87 (purposeful life), and .85 (valued life; Di Fabio, 2014b). The construct validity of the MLM is supported by positive correlations ($r = .58$, $p < .01$) with the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006), the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; $r = .43$, $p < .01$), and positive affect assessed through the positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988; $r = .49$, $p < .01$), and inverse correlations with negative affect assessed through the PANAS (Di Fabio, 2014b; Watson et al., 1988; $r = −.20$, $p < .01$).

Procedure

The questionnaires were administered by trained psychologists in conjunction with university-level psychology classes. Participation was voluntary, and the participants received no compensation. The sequence of the administration of the questionnaires was alternated to control for possible presentation effects during the administration.

Ethical Issues

The purpose of the research was explained to the participants, they were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and written informed consent was obtained. Written permission was also obtained for the anonymous publication of the findings. The research was conducted according to the requirements of privacy and informed consent laid down in Italian law (Law Decree DL-196/2003). The research adhered to the ethical requirements stipulated in the latest version of the Declaration of Helsinki revised in Fortaleza (World Medical Association, 2013).

Data Analysis Plan

The factor structure of the LPRS was examined preliminarily through EFA (using principal axis factoring with Promax rotation) using a random subsample of 200 participants drawn from the full sample. Next, AMOS Version 6 (Arbuckle, 2005) was used to carry out confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with maximum likelihood using the remaining 302 sample participants to verify the LRPS factor structure identified in the EFA. Model adequacy was examined by calculating not only the χ^2 value (a statistic that is influenced by larger samples) but also by calculating other fit indices such as the ratio between χ^2 value and degrees of freedom (χ^2/df; ratio values between 1 and 3 are considered to indicate good quality). Comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990) and nonnormed fit index (NNFI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973; values greater than .90 indicate good adequacy of the model; Bentler, 1990) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Browne & Cudeck, 1993; values lower than .08 indicate good model fit to data; Browne, 1990) were calculated.

Descriptive statistics (the means and standard deviations for the LPRS and the subscales as derived and confirmed through CFA) were calculated to describe the sample features for the entire sample. Cronbach's α coefficients and item–field correlations were calculated to determine the internal consistency of the total scale and each subscale. Because processes of life and career planning are known to vary for men and women (Kantamneni, 2013), gender comparisons were examined for each of the subscales to explore the existence of gender

differences. Pearson's correlation coefficients between the LPRS, the AS, and the MLM were calculated to assess the construct validity of the LPRS.

Results

The results of the EFA to determine the underlying factor structure are shown in Table 1. Fifteen items loaded on three factors and the adequacy of the item sample was measured as .85 ($p < .001$) based on the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin test (Field, 2009). According to Field (2005), this indicates that the 15 items correlated sufficiently well with the extracted factors. Kaiser's criterion (Field, 2009) extracted three factors with eigen values larger than one from the 15 items in the LPRS. The total variance explained by these three factors was 66.25%. Six of 21 items with factor loadings below .40 were eliminated, yielding a measure of 15 items.

Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results (Principal Axis Factoring Method, Promax Rotation).

Item	Factors and Item Loadings		
	Authenticity	Acquiescence	Clarity/ Projectuality
The personal projects for my future life are full of meaning for me	**.99**	.02	.15
The projects for my future life are full of meaning for me	**.96**	.03	.10
The professional projects for my future life are full of meaning for me	**.73**	.01	.14
Who I want to become in the next chapter of my personal life story is full of meaning for me	**.61**	.03	.20
The projects for my future life are anchored by my most authentic values	**.54**	.01	.13
My professional project is more anchored by the values of the society in which I live than my most authentic values	.13	**.82**	.03
My personal project is more anchored by the values of the society in which I live than my most authentic values	.04	**.82**	.04
The projects for my future life are more anchored by the values of the society in which I live than my most authentic values	.07	**.80**	.14
My professional project is anchored by the values of the society in which I live	.04	**.67**	.12
My personal project is anchored by the values of the society in which I live	.06	**.63**	.07
The projects for my future life are clearly defined	.08	.03	**.79**
My personal project is clearly defined	.05	.01	**.76**
My professional project is clearly defined	.08	.02	**.74**
It is clear for me who I want to become in the next chapter of my professional life story	.24	.02	**.59**
It is clear to me what it fully entails for what I want to become in the next chapter of my professional life story	.12	.09	**.51**

Note. Boldface factor loadings indicate items included in each factor.

To confirm the three-factor structure of the LPRS identified through the EFA, a subsequent CFA was calculated for the 302 remaining students in our sample.

Five goodness-of-fit indices were calculated to assess goodness of fit: Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin, and Summers's (1977) relative/normed χ^2/df (calculated to minimize the impact of sample size on the model χ^2; Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008), RMSEA; the NNFI, the CFI, and the standardized root mean square residuals (SRMR). Overall, these indicators indicated a goodness of fit of the model. This model, in turn, indicated a good fit to the data obtained: $\chi^2(2) =$ 4.48, $p = .000$; CFI = .94; NNFI = 0.91; RMSEA = .08; SRMR = .06 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hoyle, 1995; Kenny & McCoach, 2003). The 15-item measure in Italian is available from the first author. Cronbach's α coefficients were calculated for the three dimensions of the LPRS, which we labeled as AU (.86), acquiescence (.83), clarity/projectuality (.89), and LPRS total (.86).

Two-tailed *t* test comparisons exploring differences between the male and female groups on the LPRS are shown in Table 2. For two factors, clarity/projectuality and acquiescence, the males scores were higher than the females.

Table 2. Two-tailed *t* Test Comparisons Between the Male ($n = 222$) and the Female ($n = 280$) Groups on the Life Project Reflexivity Scale (LPRS).

LPRS Dimensions	Male/Female	$M\bar{x}$	SD	*p*	Cohen's *d*
Authenticity	Male	19.68	3.73	ns	.09[a]
	Female	19.35	3.39		
	Total	19.49	3.54		
Acquiescence	Male	15.91	4.57	<.05	.54[b]
	Female	13.67	3.76		
	Total	14.66	4.28		
Clarity/projectuality	Male	18.64	3.95	<.05	.54[b]
	Female	16.57	3.68		
	Total	17.48	3.93		

Source: Cohen (1988).
[a]Small effect (.00 to .2). [b]Large effect (.5 to .8;
*p < .05 (significant at a 5% level of significance).

Pearson's two-tailed correlations between the LPRS and its three dimensions as well as the ML and the AU are shown in Table 3. The total LPRS score and the clarity/projectuality and AU factors of the LPRS were significantly associated with the AS and MLM. All three LPRS subscale factors were associated with the LPRS total. The acquiescence factor was associated with the LPRS clarity/projectuality factor, but not with the LPRS AU factor or the AS or MLM.

Table 3. Pearson's Two-Tailed Correlations Between the Life Project Reflexivity Scale (LPRS), Meaning in Life, and the Authenticity.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5
1. Authenticity	—				
2. Acquiescence	.06	—			
3. Projectuality/clarity	.57**	.26**	—		
4. LPRS total	.70**	.64**	.83**	—	
5. Meaningful life measure	.56**	.06	.53**	.51**	—
6. Authenticity Scale	.39**	.05	.29**	.22**	.34**

Note. n = 502.
**p < .01.

Discussion

This study examined the psychometric properties of the LPRS in efforts to develop a reliable and valid measure of life project reflexivity that could serve to advance theory, research, and practice in life design and career construction in the context of a rapidly shifting work context. The current study follows a pilot study (Di Fabio, 2015) in efforts to verify the factor structure of the LPRS and add to reliability and validity evidence for use of the measure in the Italian context. The study also examined gender differences in the total and subscale scores to explore the relationship between the gender and the assessed constructs.

Factor analysis (EFA and CFA) confirmed the existence of a three-dimension model. The three-dimensional model is similar to the factor structure obtained in the pilot and with theoretical expectations derived from career construction (Savickas, 2013) and life construction (Guichard, 2013) theories for the development of life-career plans. More specifically, the three factor–derived dimensions, clarity/projectuality, AU, and acquiescence, are generally aligned with the tenets that life and identity construction (Guichard, 2009, 2013) should contribute to life-career projects that are clear, based on one's own authentic values (rather than those of others) and offer personal meaning. The AU dimension (e.g., "The projects for my future life are full of meaning for me," "The projects for my future life are anchored by my most authentic values) refers to an awareness of future career–personal–life projects as grounded in one's most authentic values and offering meaning that is aligned with those values. The AU subscale thus integrates awareness of the authentic self and meaning as a basis for future life projects. This integration of awareness of the authentic self and meaning reflects the optimal outcome of the reflective self-attunement process (Di

Fabio, 2014c), whereby the individual considers one's objective and subjective talents and motivations based on authentic values and meaning as a foundation for future projects. The clarity/projectuality dimension (e.g. "My future life projects are clearly defined") refers to individuals' clarity about their career–personal–life projects and assesses whether they know what they want to become in their next life chapters. Clarity in projectuality follows Sullivan's conceptualization (1953), referring to clarity in one's capacity to project the true self in the definition and pursuit of future goals. Clarity also entails an awareness of the implications of one's career and life project decisions. The acquiescence dimension (e.g. "The projects for my future life are anchored more by the values of the society in which I live than my most authentic values") refers to the inclination to accept "other-directed" career and life projects passively (albeit reluctantly at times). This dimension reveals a sense of conforming to and passively accepting values imposed on people by their society (which includes their living environment and the groups to which they belong) rather than basing the career–life projects on one's authentic values.

Further analyses of the LPRS also demonstrated sound psychometric properties, contributing additional evidence for its promise as a new instrument in the field of personality and career counseling. The internal consistency reliability of the total LPRS score as well as that of each of its three dimensions are solid and somewhat improved over the pilot version (Di Fabio, 2015b). Correlations between the total dimensions and the clarity/projectuality and AU dimensions of the LPRS, the MLM, and the AU were generally aligned with theoretical expectations, offering evidence of construct validity. The strong correlations between the LPRS total score with the AS and the MLM reflect the extent to which life project reflexivity combines AU and meaningfulness. The extent to which the AU subscale of the LPRS also correlates with both the MLM and AS also reflect the way in which AU and meaning are integrally related. The items that comprise the AU subscale include ratings of future projects as full of meaning and based on authentic values.

The LPRS acquiescence subscale performed in ways that were somewhat inconsistent with expectations. Contrary to expectations, acquiescence was positively associated with LPRS total and clarity, suggesting that the choice of a life project that is aligned with societal values can be based on clarity and an

overall reflective stance. However, acquiescence was neither positively nor negatively associated with AU, as assessed by the LPRS AU factor or the AS, or with the attainment of life meaning, as assessed by the MLM. It thus seems that one may choose a career–life project that is aligned with societal values, without necessarily sacrificing meaning or AU. On the other hand, acquiescence does not promote the attainment of meaning or AU. It should be noted that the LPRS items that loaded on the acquiescence factor include those that describe the prioritization of societal values over authentic values (e.g., "My professional project is more anchored by the values of the society in which I live than my most authentic values"), but also items that do not specify the prioritization of societal values (e.g., "My professional project is anchored by the values of the society in which I live"). Further research is needed to understand the contribution of the acquiescence subscale to life project reflexivity research and practice and when adhering to societal values supports and challenges AU in the self and life projects.

The gender comparisons, although exploratory, revealed some interesting findings with regard to clarity and acquiescence that might be examined in further research. Whereas no differences were found between the genders in terms of the AU factor, the men achieved significantly higher scores than the women on the other two dimensions. The men, it seems, had a clearer sense of their future in terms of their career and life projects. The men's scores in regard to acquiescence, too, were significantly higher than those of the women. Regarding these differences, it seems that men were more influenced by societal values to devise career and life projects that would enable them to meet the criteria for success as defined by societal norms. While the reasons for these gender differences were not assessed in this study, it is possible that men continue to be influenced by the traditional male gender role norm of family economic provider (Richardson & Schaeffer, 2013) and thus may be more susceptible to pressures to select a life project that is valued and rewarded by society. The women were less acquiescent and less inclined to meet general societal expectations as well as the expectations of significant others, tending rather, to draw on their authentic needs when devising career–life projects. Some women's unwillingness to acquiesce to societal norms could impact their career advancement adversely, if they are not choosing pathways that are valued and rewarded by society. The mean scores for both men and women across the three LPRS subscales suggest

that neither men nor women are highly acquiescent, as acquiescence is lower than clarity and AU for both men and women.

Limitations and Implications

This study was conducted at one Italian university. Additional research is needed to gather data on students (and, in fact, other groupings of people as well) across varied age groups in relation to their career progress, life meaning, and well-being, thus yielding further information on the validity of the scale and its overall value. Research in other countries could initially focus on revising and validating the measure for other contexts and eventually yield interesting comparative information across national contexts that are also experiencing rapid economic and workforce changes. All of the measures are self-report and are thus subject to self-report and response bias. Further convergent and discriminant validation using a combination of self-report and other measures would be very helpful in further evaluation of the scale overall and the subscales. The LPRS was completed on a single occasion so that the stability of the measure without intervention is not certain. Future research could respond to this need by assessing test–retest reliability over varied time periods.

The LPRS is a promising tool that could potentially be used to assist clients in understanding and cultivating their reflexivity with regard to the clarity, AU, and meaningfulness of their future life projects. It might also be helpful for counselors and clients in setting goals and assessing change in life project reflexivity during counseling. While a participant with a satisfactory sense of reflexivity would be expected to score high on projectuality and AU with low acquiescence, reflection on subscale variability and possible explanations for variations could be helpful. Analysis and discussion of scores across the LPRS might facilitate client insight and self-awareness regarding their life project reflexivity profile. While a focus on variability might add to the utility of the LPRS in counseling, further research is needed to support this use, particularly with regard to understanding the role and validity of acquiescence. While the pattern of high clarity and AU and lower acquiescence is generally evident as indicated by overall sample means, variability was also observed and acquiescence was unrelated with construct validation measures of AU and meaning. Although the acquiescence factor did not follow our expectations, we believe that it may be potentially helpful in counseling

as the client can reflect on the extent to which the clarity of the life project is associated with meaning, AU, and acquiescence. These variations, as well as the magnitude and reasons for these differences, might be a useful focus for further research that could clarify the role of acquiescence in relation to life project AU and meaning. The relationship of profile variations to long-term career management and well-being outcomes needs to be examined in further research.

Conclusion

Against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world of work and the need to enable people to clarify and strengthen their narrative identity and, especially, their reflexivity (reflecting on and taking the steps needed to promote current and future projects), we set out to develop and validate an inventory with satisfactory psychometric properties that could be easily administered and useful to clients seeking life design counseling. The findings reported in this article, notwithstanding the study's limitations, indicate that the LPRS has good psychometric qualities, is brief, and can be easily administered to small or large groups of people. Although further research is needed to support the use and interpretation of the LPRS, we expect that it will be useful to clients in career counseling by assessing their overall sense of reflexivity regarding future projects and exploring their levels of clarity/projectuality, AU, and acquiescence. The need for such an instrument is borne out by the global acknowledgment of life project reflexivity as a fundamental prerequisite for authentic and satisfactory career–life construction (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2016a; Guichard, 2013; Savickas, 2014).

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