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CHAPTER 8

RUPTURES AND TRANSITIONS IN WORK PATHS

Uses of Normative Fields in the Life Course

Maija Korhonen, Tania Zittoun, and Katri Komulainen

To approach work in people's lives, that is, the evolution of work with time as people develop, there has been a long-standing field of inquiry examining vocational "careers." Focusing on people's professional achievement, the notion of career also reflects certain societal values; more, it may even be seen as a normative notion, allowing us to evaluate who has a more, or less successful career, and often, implicitly, life. In this chapter, we propose to reverse the problematic; adopting a sociocultural stance, we propose to put the person's life course to the fore. Doing so, we then consider people's "work path," that is, the evolving pathway of their activities related to what is normatively considered as "work," and examine how people make sense of it. Overall, we adopt a critical sociocultural stance, showing that people seem to make sense of their experiences related to work drawing on diverse societal values and discourse. In that sense, we hope to show that people's work paths are deeply related to the development of people's life courses.

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In order to do so, this chapter is organized in five sections. We first summarize the classical notion of "career" used in vocational psychology and highlight some of its limitations. Second, we present a sociocultural approach that allows us to describe, at one level, people's movement through different social settings over time, and at the other level, people's changing spheres of experiences. We then present the cases and the methodology on which this paper is built, that is, interviews with professionals aged 40 to 50, in Finland, who experienced a major rupture in a work-related sphere of experience. Fourth, we present the stories of these persons according to the normative semiotic field they use to make sense of these events, their work path, and even their life course as a whole. The final section discusses the implication of this analysis and draws some conclusions.

FROM CAREER TO THE WORK-PATH IN THE LIFE COURSE

In this first section, we present how sociological approaches to work and vocational psychology have conceived work in people's lives. Mainly, the concept of "career" has been used, yet also reflecting, if not promoting, a normative career ideology. This allows us to show some of the limits of these approaches, before proposing a different stance.

The notion of "life course" is commonsensically understood as a person's uniquely made life trajectory. However, sociology has shown how much the notion can also be understood as an institution, which regulates people's movement through their life, both in terms of a sequence of positions, and in terms of biographical orientations by which people organize their experiences and plans (Kohli, 2007). In particular, the temporal regulation of the modern life course has been based on the idea of the trajectory of wage labor consisting of the subsequent periods of "preparation," "activity," and "retirement" (Kohli, 2007, p. 255). Roughly summarized, historically, since Hugo Münsterberg's industrial psychology in the 1920's, research in organizational and work psychology had been focused on the active period of waged labor in people's lives (van Drunen, van Strien, & Haas, 2004). Modern vocational psychology, in contrast, has focused on the trajectory of the workforce, designating this with the concept of "career."

Colling and Young (2000) have discussed the range of meanings designated by the concept of a career. In the abstract, it can refer to the individual's movement through time and space. Like in Kohli's (2007) definition, it can refer to the intersection of an individual biography and social structures. Young and Collin also distinguish scientific from rhetorical uses of the concept of career, and note that its rhetorical use may disguise its ideological underpinnings, namely, that career refers to work experience of some groups of people and not of others; career can thus be considered

as an elitist term. Hence, the idea of a person's career as reflecting a hierarchical and planned series of jobs that are thoroughly selected, is relevant to only a minority of individuals around the globe (Anxo & Boulin, 2006; Blustein, Palladino Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004). In that sense, career is less an objective descriptor than a term associated to a certain ideology.

According to Richardson (2000), such "career ideology" has successfully served the needs of the economy by producing loyal and committed workers. It has also fostered the beliefs that a career results from choice and individual effort and talent, that "a person is what he or she does," and finally, that success in paid work shall be a source of self-esteem (Richardson, 2000, p. 201). In addition, it has marginalized other areas of work than wage work: "The disappearance and splitting of work from the family domain that is embedded in career discourses is associated with another split which personal life is considered the realm of relationships while work is relegated to the occupational domain" (Richardson, 2009, p. 80).

Nevertheless, it has been argued that this career-ideology is fast eroding (Richardson, 2000). The unsecure nature of current working life has led to fundamental changes in everyday as well as academic understanding of careers, and variations of the concept of career have been proposed. For example, in 1996, Arthur and Rousseau introduced the notion of "boundaryless career." The notion designates the fact that an individual's flexibility becomes central, and careers appear more open, less structured and controlled by employers. They thus write: "Put simply, boundary-less careers are the opposite of 'organizational careers'—a career conceived to unfold in a single employment setting" (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996, p. 5). The boundaryless career discourse, however, is the manifestation of a wider, normative neoliberal discourse that emphasises individual, rather than societal or organizational responsibility for economic and career outcomes (Roper, Ganesh, & Inkson, 2010). In such discourse, employees are constructed as autonomous individuals with personal responsibility for their own success and active constructors of their own work paths (Roper et al., 2010).

In the book *The Future of Career* (Collin & Young, 2000, pp. 8–9) the editors Richard Young and Audrey Collin argue that people's experiences of discontinuity associated to present working life challenges the fundamental principles and standards on which career theory, research, and practice have stood. They encourage us to ask not only whether career provides people with continuity of their experiences across their lifetime, but also on what grounds the notion of career can be revitalized to address the very problems that seem to be contributing to its demise. Because career ideology maintains and legitimates hierarchical power structures and weighs heavily in the theory, research, and practice of vocational psychology, more inclusive approaches to work paths are needed (Blustein et al., 2004).

How then do describe people's working life without the normative assumptions of the concept of career, yet, without ignoring the societal values and the norms revealed by its criticism? For this, we propose a double displacement. First, we will refocus our analysis on people's courses of life over time and space, and admit that within it, we can identify people's work paths. In that sense, wage work can be seen as one of the many threads that constitute a life. Second, we will consider that the ideology, discourses, and values related to "career" are still present in the societal context, and may provide people with means to interpret their own life courses and the place of work within. In that sense, they prove normative semiotic fields from which people can draw to guide their work life. This, in turn, allows us to identify other interpretative meaning fields that might be as significant in people's defining and sensemaking of their own work path.

A SOCIOCULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY OF WORK PATHS

Sociocultural psychology proposes an alternative approach to normative understandings of the life course, and especially, to the conception of the role of work in people's lives. This approach is grounded in a dynamic and dialogical epistemology, which can be characterized as follows. First, as a whole, it considers the mutual definition of the individual person and her social and cultural environment. Second, it preserves the person's unicity, a person conceptualized as embodied, emotional, historical, and actively engaged in sensemaking. Third, it is relational and interactional, as it considers that the person cannot be thought out of his webs of relations with other persons, real or absent, objects, and their environment. Fourth, it considers all these dynamics located in time. And fifth, it puts a specific emphasis on semiotic dynamics—the circulation of signs that allow meaning, communication, memory, and imagination (Valsiner, 2014; Zittoun et al., 2013; Zittoun & Gillespie, 2016).

From a sociocultural life course perspective, a person's life trajectory is uniquely made, and evolves as the person moves in and through the social and cultural world. Life course unfolds in time, and between social settings (Zittoun et al., 2013; Zittoun, 2016a). From such perspective, we propose to call the "work path" these parts of a life course that is treated, by the person and the social environment, as part of her work—here, we focus mainly on wage work. We then need to differentiate two levels of descriptions: first, we need to describe the social and cultural fields in which people's trajectories unfold; second, we need to apprehend their own experiences of these fields (Zittoun & Valsiner, 2016).

First, from an analytical, observer's perspective, in order to describe the sociocultural fields, we can borrow a range of concepts developed by the

social sciences and redefined in psychology. From this perspective, we will say that a work path unfolds as a person moves in, out, and through various work-related settings and frames, in different material and social locations. Settings and frames are mutually dependent. Frames can be seen as the general agreements that constrain the field of possibilities of one or several agents in a given setting, but do not determine it (Zittoun et al., 2013, p. 148). A frame creates the conditions of answerability for each person, and through their responses, they assume a position towards the current situation (Zittoun et al., 2013, p. 148). A personal position is always suggested by the social and cultural meanings, involves an intentional state, has agentive qualities (implies some form of action within the frame), and operates with semiotic means (Zittoun et al., 2013). In addition, we need to define overgeneralized meanings or "semiotic fields" (after Valsiner, 2014), that imbue and shape many settings and their related frames. From such perspective, a working company constitutes a setting, people interacting about a given professional task do this as part of a specific frame, but their need to support their negotiation in terms of "excellence" reflect the larger normative semiotic field. The notion of "normative fields" partly overlaps with that of "social representation" (Moscovici, 2000). These fields are quite diffuse, and group institutional practices—values, ways of speaking, specific discourses, ways of doing—to which people may refer under their semiotic aspect; normative fields in that sense offer people with elements that can be used as semiotic resources to make sense of their lives, organize their narratives, define new practices, and so on. In that sense, these have hypergeneralized "semiotic field" like properties (Valsiner, 2014).

Second, we need to account for a more phenomenological apprehension of these aspects. For this, we have proposed the notion of "sphere of experience" drawing on Schuetz (1944) and Lewin (1936), to designate people's experiences of recurrent patterns of activity, feelings, and engagements, that constitute a "same" sphere beyond its daily changes (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2015, 2016). Hence, people recognize their typical working sphere of experience, or their dinner-with-friends spheres of experience; these might change place or schedule, but still may be the "same" and taken-for-granted. People may engage different spheres of experience in the same setting: one can work, then have coffee with friends in the same office space. On a daily basis, as people move in and out of settings and their related frames, they also alternate different spheres of experiences. Over a longer period, when we consider a person's life course or work path, we can see that he or she may leave specific frames for good, or enter radical new settings, which then demand new spheres of experiences. Such moves can radically question the taken-for-granted nature of people's spheres of experience. We have called "ruptures" people's experience of a radical disruption of the taken for granted situations, thus designating what has been also

called disruption, crises, life-turns, and so on (Erikson, 1959). Experienced ruptures can be the result of different types of "causes": personal change or maturation (e.g., acquisition of skills through training, personal reflection), changes in one's settings (e.g., a new manager in one's team), or transformations affecting more globally many people (e.g., a financial crises). Ruptures signify the end of some spheres of experience and the need to elaborate new ones; these processes of catalyzed changes, we have named "transitions" (Masdonati & Zittoun, 2012; Zittoun, 2006; Zittoun & Perret-Clermont, 2009). Note here that, if the concept of transition has largely been used in the analysis of life course, and can be used as transdisciplinary analyzer (Levy, Ghisletta, Le Goff, Spini, & Widmer, 2005), it can thus designate two different phenomena: On the one hand, is can be used to name the observable move from one frame to another one, such as in a career change; on the other hand, it can designate a first-person experience that a situation has substantially changed, such as when a new working policy transforms a person's daily experience. It is the latter understanding that we privilege here; consequently, the specificity of our dynamic approach lies on the fact that transitions are not identified a priori as institutional moves (e.g., from school to work) or normative changes (e.g., getting married), but as dynamics of change triggered by experienced ruptures. Ruptures call for new actions; practical steps and new knowledge may be needed to adjust to the rupture and to manage and live daily life.

Moreover, people make sense of their own lives and the causes and consequences of the changes in terms of their past, present, and future life; they link present changes to past experiences; they need to revise their past plans according to the new situation, to revise their scale of values to accommodate new facts (Zittoun et al., 2013, pp. 263–264). As persons develop new actions and understanding, they position themselves in relation to the rupture, also transforming their identities, that is, seeing themselves, their thoughts and actions as well as their relation to the world from a new perspective and under new conditions of recognition (or lack thereof; Masdonati & Zittoun, 2012; Zittoun, 2006, 2007a; Zittoun, Cornish, Gillespie, & Aveling, 2008, p. 164). These kinds of processes can be conceptualized as developmental transitions.

Hence, if we combine the two perspectives proposed here, the life course of a person can be seen as the trajectory of moving through a variety of settings and their related frames; and from the person's perspective, it is a long succession of alternating, appearing, or disappearing spheres of experiences. The work path itself designates the part of the life course, or the series of spheres of experiences, identified and negotiated as "work" in their respective frames. The work path thus involves ruptures and transitions. Like for any others, people may then draw on a variety of resources to support these transition processes. A wide number of studies show the

importance of institutional arrangements which may guide and support these changes (e.g., a training enterprise), personal relationships (e.g., a psychologist, a friend), general knowledge and representations, or cultural elements used as symbolic resources (Gillespie, Cornish, Aveling, & Zittoun, 2008; Londino, 2012; Masdonati & Zittoun, 2012; Muster, 2010; Zittoun, 2007b; Zittoun, Duveen, Gillespie, Ivinson, & Psaltis, 2003; Zittoun & Gillespie, 2013). In addition, here, we argue that, given the pervasive importance of work in our societies, people largely draw on what we call "normative semiotic fields."

To sum up, we propose here a life course perspective to work, and consider people's work paths. These we apprehend not only as they take place in a diversity of professional settings and frames, but also from a first person perspective, that is, as implying a diversity of spheres of experiences. From this perspective, "career changes" are ruptures in the experienced work path. The specificity of our approach here is that we pay specific attention to the semiotic fields defining work in our societies, and that we propose to examine how these shape lives, or rather, become resources for people engaged in making sense of their work path and especially, experienced ruptures. In other words, we propose to consider sociocultural resources people use to make sense of their work paths. As we will see, as much as professional trajectories cannot be fully isolated from the overall life course, semiotic fields used to make sense of one's work path might be work-specific, but also, pertain to many other life domains.

In what follows, we present the specific cases of six adults, ages 40 to 50, and their work paths in Finland. We first quickly present the Finnish context, before presenting the data collected by students under our supervision (i.e., Maija Korhonen [MK] and Katri Komulainen [KK]), and then we analyze the data.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY: LIFE COURSES IN THEIR CONTEXT AND THE STEPS OF ANALYSIS

Before discussing specific life courses and especially work paths, we need to sketch the national economic context in which these work paths have evolved, that is, Finland in the decades of the 1990s and 2000s. Before the 1990s, one of the most influential political projects in Finland was the Nordic welfare model with its ideals of universal basic services and redistributive social security benefits financed by relatively high and progressive taxation (Kantola & Kananen, 2013). Since 1990, however, the Finnish government has dismantled the Nordic welfare state paradigm and adopted Schumpeterian ideas of competitiveness, market efficiency, and innovation policies.[1] At the same time, Finland has been facing the new international economic

order of free capital movements, European regional integration, and global competition (Kantola & Kananen, 2013). These changes have also produced reforms in the educational system, and new policies have structured educational opportunities and learning experiences of each cohort in a new way. Due to the fast tempo of these changes, intergenerational differences are exceptionally large in Finland in relation to education. However, it can be said that education is generally speaking highly valued among all generations (Aro, Rinne, Lahti, & Olkinuora, 2005). Moreover, the Finnish society is characterized by a high average level of education. The society also supports people's education strongly by offering free schooling even at the university level (Aapola-Kari, 2012). There are nevertheless two differentially valued educational routes: An academic educational route via general upper secondary education to higher education, and the practical, vocational route with an early labor-market entry. The meritocratic discourse of abilities, that is, the definition of intelligence as a mainly cognitive capacity, with an implied distinction between theoretical or academic abilities and practical skills has played an important role in the formation of symbolic order of these routes (Räty & Snellman, 1998). Even if Finland has been celebrated as a country where everyone has the possibility to educate themselves and to get ahead in life through education (Siivonen et al., 2016), social reproduction is still strong: It is eight times more likely for a young person coming from an academically educated family to continue studies at university and follow an academic career path than for others (Kivinen, Hedman, & Kaipainen, 2007). Moreover, there is a strong positive correlation between the level of education and the probability of employment for both men and women (Ollikainen, 2006).[2] The female labor force participation rate in Finland is 67% (Statistics Finland, 2018). The labor market, however, is highly segregated: Women are highly overrepresented in health, education, and service sectors, whereas men mainly occupy the technical and agricultural sectors (Ollikainen, 2006).

Our data consists of life course interviews with women and men aged between 40 and 50, gathered in 2013–2016 at the University of Eastern Finland. About half of the interviewed persons had higher education and half of them had vocational education. The interviews were collected in Finnish by psychology students as part of an MA assignment under our supervision (KK and MK). In the interviews, people were asked to talk about their whole life course, that is, reflect their experiences from childhood family and school experiences up to adulthood family and working life. The interviews covered themes such as education and work paths; current position and experiences in working life; marital relationships; parenting and family life; interpersonal relationships outside the family; personal values, interests, and goals; future plans and prospects, as well as general evaluations of one's course of life.

Our analysis of the life course data consisted of four stages. First, all 65 interviews were transcribed and reviewed by searching and identifying work-related ruptures and transitions in the interviewees' life courses. Work-related ruptures were understood to include any external or internal events or longer processes in people's professional spheres of experiences which brought new elements and challenged their work paths, or even their life course. We chose to identify ruptures and transitions that originated from the spheres of experiences related to wage work. We looked at the different origins of ruptures and transitions (e.g., societal factors, internal drivers for change) and traced the nature of ruptures and transitions (e.g., related to concrete steps and actions in occupational domain of life, changes in perspectives on work–life). As result of this analysis, we identified different causes of ruptures: work paths interrupted by burnout; education in adulthood (e.g., changes in a work path through attending (higher) education); unemployment due to getting fired; and changes in work values (e.g., occurring due to aging and family situation). It should be noted that there might have been several ruptures and transitions in each person's work path (e.g., developing burnout and changing occupation as a result of burnout experience).

In a second stage, we selected the eight most illustrative cases in terms of each cause of ruptures out of 65 interviews, and translated these from Finnish to English by a professional translator. In the data, the ruptures and the related discontinuities in the life course tended to enhance narrative meaning making. To these interviews, we made a more detailed narrative analysis by using Labovian approach, and reconstructed each person's narrative along its core elements—orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result, and coda (see Patterson, 2008).[3] The third stage consisted in a theoretically driven analysis of the transitions retrospectively engaged by the participants; we asked what kind of learning (e.g., in terms of skills, attitudes, and values) and identity change the narratives revealed (Zittoun, 2009). Finally, when we examined the sensemaking dynamic at stake, we had to develop a fourth level of analysis, which consisted in identifying the normative semiotic fields through which the persons made sense of and explained their working life ruptures and positioned themselves.

As a whole, as a contribution to the study of work, we propose here to examine transitions in people's work paths and to highlight the semiotic fields to which people refer as they narrate their lives. Our argument is that, in the context of neoliberal Finnish society, people draw not only on career ideology, but also, on other ones. In order to highlight this, we organize the analysis according to four emerging normative semiotic fields. Due to space limitation, we decided to present only four exemplary cases, one to illustrate each field.

FOUR NORMATIVE FIELDS TO MAKE SENSE OF RUPTURES IN THE WORK PATH

In what follows, we present people's cases according the normative semiotic fields to which they refer. Although they don't mention explicitly these as such, we could make the hypothesis that their narratives collected in the frame of research interviews, as well as the more general interpretation of their life courses and life path which might have presided to some decisions made, actions undertaken, feelings and embodied experiences, were guided by these very generalized culturally shaped semiotic normative fields. The first field refers to the value given to education in Finland; the second one concerns womanhood and a possible redefinition of gender; the third one refers to a more and more present semiotic field of "self-development"; only the last one refers to "career" as such, yet in a subverted way. In each case, we present how the semiotic field was used by the person to make sense of the experienced ruptures, and to accompany transitions—identity transformation, learning, and sensemaking, in professional spheres of experiences and often in others as well.

Normative Field of Social Mobility and Utilization of One's Talents Through Education: Education in Adulthood as Developmental Transition

In order to give a taste of the life stories, we present the first case, that of Risto,[4] more exhaustively; we organize it according to a classical narrative analysis (see above). We then discuss the underpinning normative field.

CASE STUDY: RISTO

Orientation: "I just took the easy way [at early school years]. I was awfully lazy and never learned to do homework. I would have needed someone to give me a little kick every now and then [in high school] I did, of course, only mandatory subjects in Finnish Matriculation Examination, for I did no more than what you had to do. And I got straight A's from maths and mother tongue. I got my degree [the basic IT degree]. But then I started thinking that why shouldn't I study for real for a little bit. To go to a real school. And I'd also started feeling fed up with what I was doing [websites]. And it started feeling really stupid, puttering away by myself, and I was sick and tired of it, like "I'm not going to be doing this for the rest of my life, that's for sure."

Complication: Well the wife then gave me a gentle nudge, asking if I could finally do something about it. Darn it, that's what I've needed all my life, someone to tell me to stop talking and do something about it! Like, what are you standing there, talking about it, get at it! So my wife got me High School Chemistry 1 as a Christmas present and said, "There, read that and take the exams." She gave me a little nudge. Something that my parents never did, vocationally I mean.

Resolution: And, well, I did, and I went to the exams, and I got in.

Evaluation: And that was a real milestone in my life, like a boundary. There was before and then there was after. It was before and after the wife. That's where the line was. I was sort of fumbling around while others got ahead, ahead in life, and I was just, well, bouncing around. I sort of fell by the side of the road, I didn't become marginalized or anything, but I sort of fell off the wagon. I would've needed someone to put me in line, since I couldn't do it myself. On the other hand, I know that, having gone to university as an adult, if I'd gone there straight from high school, I wouldn't have lasted a week. I'm absolutely convinced of that. If I'd gone to university then, I never would have become an MSc. Now, I think that it was good for me to wait until I'd grown up, because with the sense of young Risto, it never would have worked out, it wouldn't have come to anything. I was a different person back then. And I feel like I'm absolutely in the right field. I'm really happy, actually. It's hard to imagine doing anything else, really. The main thing for me is having got my master's degree. I think that's what matters, seeing where I come from and what I was like. It was, I'm proud of it, it was pretty big. A good move. And people have come to me, you know, to say well done, fantastic. Not everybody does that as an adult, after all, studying a degree. I kind of jumped into something completely, you know, it's not a class society or anything, but I did climb the ladder. It [university studies] does educate you quite a bit, it does change how you think. And I did change during my time at university. I changed quite a bit from that bloke who churned out websites. That's how I feel. It put my values straight in a way. I used to say that I'd sell wellingtons if I could sell enough of them. I only measured things with money.

The story of Risto is mainly told in relation to educational settings. In his life story, Risto sees his efforts towards higher education and participation in it as a major turning point in his life. He interprets and explains his early experiences in educational settings by positioning himself as a lazy, but not brainless student. Despite of his lack of efforts, he continues from high school to vocational education and gets a vocational qualification in information technology. In his work-related spheres of experiences, Risto feels uncomfortable with his occupational choices, however. In a more private sphere of experience, his wife, a significant other, acknowledges his vocational discomfort, and creates the rupture that will trigger Risto's entrance and commitment to university studies, and thus his transition. What

follows in the above example, is the evaluation and the coda of the story, in which Risto evaluates and criticizes his younger self from a position of more mature adult who has "climbed the ladder" by educating himself. Thus, Risto's story can be perceived as a maturation narrative, where Risto distances his past, aimless self from the present. The story implies a developmental transition, which involves learning processes, identity changes in terms of self-definition and social recognition ("people have come to me to say well done, fantastic"), and sense making. Starting university studies signifies the end of Risto's experience of himself as just "drifting" in life, and triggers changes in positions of the self. Learning processes include studying a degree, which leads to changes in Risto's thinking. Identity change—"I was a different person back then"—relates to changes in work values from material to immaterial and from instrumental to expressive.

From our sociocultural perspective, we propose to read Risto's story as guided by a normative field of *social mobility and utilization of one's talents through education*, implying an ethos of meritocracy and a strong belief in educational democracy (Rinne, 2006). This semiotic field sets normative standards to the individuals' movement in time and space (towards upward social mobility), simultaneously stressing individual, innate capabilities and certain kind of ideals concerning valuable work. In light of these norms, Risto's past self appears as incomplete in terms of the middle-class ideals of self-actualization through education and working life and success gained by innate talents. Within this field, Risto positions himself in time and social space in a way that reveals hierarchical movement "ahead in life" in contrast to becoming "marginalized" (representing hypothetical position). Moreover, Risto's sensemaking illustrates temporal regulation of the life course. As noted by Kohli (2007), a delayed period of "preparation" in one's labor trajectory demands explanations. Lack of education or low education in adulthood can be seen as a type of discontinuity that must be evaluated and explained, that is, there is a need for a person to create coherence between the past and the present (Komulainen, 1999).

Normative Field of an Autonomous Modern Woman: "Degendering" the Self as Developmental Transition

Sari has also changed her profession in adulthood from crafts and design to technical occupation. At the time of the interview, Sari is conducting postgraduate studies while working as an engineer. In addition to educating herself in adulthood, moving to a new workplace within the technical field appears as a significant transition in her work path.

CASE STUDY: SARI

What I hate is stagnation. My earlier job at the Firm, it felt stagnant and the company is sort of conservative and treading water, they sort of expected me to behave a certain way, speak a certain way and go to that specific assembly line. After engineer training, I wanted to do something else than assembly. Even my husband asked me, was I really sure [to change a job]. You have this guaranteed job, like a sheltered job. I was like "it is for me." Like I can't take it mentally. It wasn't good for my self-esteem. I did a complete, like a complete [transformation]. Since I had long dark hair, I had them cut it short and dyed red and . . . I mean really short. So I felt like, that now I'd cut the cord with the Firm. That I'm gonna start anew . . . Then, my whole being sort of changed, my self-esteem changed, everything about me changed. And the first interview I went to, I got the job. Maybe I sort of picked myself up and said, "That's enough." Like, no more. That [cutting and dyeing the hair] was probably just, yeah, [the important sign of] change from [the past self], if you think about it. You start making some radical changes. Like at the Firm, I felt beaten down. And I told myself that, bloody hell, it can't come to anything if I'm like this and give in to these arseholes. I started wearing very different clothes, sort of changed my whole appearance. And that's how I was able to ditch the mousey old me and kind of spur myself on, that I'm not what they're trying to make me. And then I got a supervisory position at the company. From that, I took a desire to be competent, learn new things and also to make a decent career. There [in the current job] is a whole new level of stimulation here. My job description is flexible. And you take a different view, you don't stress out anymore if the kitchen's a mess and dust balls are rolling around on the floor. And I also sort of look at the information with a more critical eye, a little . . . you know, my "good girl" syndrome, always saying yes, yes, yes, but now I say no. You know, constantly and consciously projecting an attitude that I won't be pushed around. I think that it will go on [in the future] and I'll keep developing you know, it depends so much on yourself, too. I do see myself working at the same company for decades, or the rest of my life even, but I don't want to tie myself to a schedule that . . . That something, a specific job, you become stuck in it. Since I want to keep learning. I don't look at it like . . . Like I want my life to settle down in some way. I don't need others for my life or living it out. I think it all comes down to me, in the end.

In Sari's story, a Firm represents a "stagnant" setting in which her sphere of experience is restricted by others' controlling requirements for her behavior. Sari takes a position of a self-confident and independent career woman in a male-dominated profession, capable of determining her own actions at work and in life, in general. From this position, she

criticizes her past self (in her previous job) for being dependent and amenable to the demands of others. The present self, instead, cannot be "pushed around." Cutting and dying her long hair represent a symbol of radical position change, or a deliberate rupture, that occurs and supports her transition to a new job. Sari's story reflects a developmental transition that includes learning and identity change. Sari's talk about how educating herself in adulthood and gaining new attitudes and skills through education (e.g., critical thinking, ability to prioritize) has affected her life and reveals that the new work-related skills and attitudes have consequences for family life too.

By stating that she doesn't want to "settle down" or seek a stable job, Sari criticizes the normative timetable of the life course and the related expectations of middle-age as a phase of life. Sari's story seems to draw on the normative field of an autonomous modern woman, where female independence incorporates notions of self-worth, self-reliance, assertiveness, hedonism and individual autonomy rather than being dependent and controlled by others (e.g., Liu, 2014). An autonomous modern career woman position entails some identification with masculine qualities and values, such as performance orientation and strong self-esteem, simultaneously renouncing certain aspects of stereotypical femininity, such as adaptability and passivity. The position change is related to the "degendering" transformation from feminine "good girl" to an independent career person. An aspiration to take charge of one's life and eagerness to self-actualization may reflect awareness of a women's subordinate position in a male-dominated professional field. On the one hand, it embodies a widely prevailing individualism in working life as well as career as an ideology. Moreover, it sets the neoliberal notion of individual self-responsibility (*"it depends so much on yourself," "it all comes down to me, in the end");* regardless of gender, class, and ethnicity, individuals are expected to take on life projects based on self-reflexivity and choice.

Normative Field of Psychologization of the Life Course and Therapy Culture: Critique of "Career"

For Niko, burnout and the related depression after getting fired from his job as an executive manager in the forestry business represents a critical turning point in his work path, which changes the direction of his whole life. Psychotherapy appears as an important resource for this. Change from a position of fact-oriented and success-seeking manager to an insightful, human-centered expert can be conceptualized as a radical reorientation towards work and life in general.

CASE STUDY: NIKO

I finally got burnout from all this in 2012. I tried to perform. Worked far too much. I was suffering from minor depression. I'd started going to psychotherapy. I'd been fired from my job. Until that point, I was my job. I was unemployed for 500 days and in psychotherapy for the whole time. The psychotherapist pretty quickly put me on the right track. And when I started feeling better, my relationship with my wife started getting better and better as well. It really came down to eliminating that guilt. Silencing the inner voice criticizing my performance. Not having to maintain A+ standards all the time. In other words, this block, work, that was previously there, was whittled down a bit. Down to a manageable size. Apparently I had been quite absent and immensely work oriented. I think I only started to take responsibility as a parent after I got myself together. I've been a terrible dad. Maybe I'm growing to be a parent, bit by bit. I was a black-and-white person when I was young. When I was an executive and an operative manager in the forestry business, it was important that things were done in the right way. I managed things, processes. And I was completely ignorant of the fact that I needed to manage people. In work advisor training, I started being told that I was not a nasty person. I'm a warm, caring, attentive person. That's the message I get at home, too. My wife often tells me that my heart's in the right place. I do want to help. To give something. When I was younger, I couldn't listen to people at all. I was very fact-oriented. My identity has been completely transformed now. Naturally, it has to do with the changes in my values. I was looking for visibility, pure and simple. Success in the eyes of others, more than anything. Of course, that shows how low my self-confidence was. I tried to make it. To get recognition. Like, now I care a lot more about doing something with meaning. I do feel that I'm helping others. Maybe this is also the best thing for my personal growth at the moment. If I hadn't taken up work counseling and mediation, if I'd gone back to paid work, I don't think these refinement and thought processes would have happened so much. Now, the fact is that I have this new training and a new way of looking at work and life. I guess you could call it healing, or maybe a return to a reasonable state. I'm getting to the point where I am sane enough to start rebuilding myself.

As the story illustrates, Niko's psychological reorientation is followed by an external transition in working life: with help of the new understanding of the self, discovered in psychotherapy, Niko participates in work advisor training and starts working as a management mentor, thereby leaving his old manager position not only concretely, but also mentally. The new position in working life appears to be compatible with Niko's renewed perception of himself and his feelings and values. Important consequences of this transition occur in the sphere of family life: Niko recreates his relationship with his children, that is, he gets back his lost parenthood, and deepens

his marital relationship. At the end of his story, Niko takes a new perspective from which he criticizes current labor markets for being performance-oriented and based on rational calculation at the expense of humane values and people's well-being. Here, capitalism and career as an ideology encounter criticism from social and artistic points of view: they are seen to carry values of calculative individualism and pervasive commodification rather than solidarism (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005). As Niko puts it, "right now, there is so much anxiety [in Finnish working life]. People are feeling terrible at work and have problems with interaction. People are not just rational beings. In this performance society you just can't show weakness." Niko distances himself from a rat race and feels comfortable and calm with his new self and new attitude to work.

From our sociocultural point of view, the normative field on which Niko's story draws is that of a psychologization of the life course reflecting a more general "therapy culture" (Brinkmann, 2016; 2017). Within this semiotic field, the truths of psychology have become connected to ethical practices of the self, with the notions that authenticity, autonomy, and personal success can be achieved through the engagement of the self in a psychological regime of therapeutic remodeling (Rose, 1998). Psychological ethics appears thus tied to the liberal aspirations of freedom, choice, and identity. In its discourse, it seeks not to impose a new moral self upon us, but to free the self we truly are, to make it possible for us to make a project of our own life. In Niko's case, this project of "working on himself" (Rose, 1998) is not limited to the sphere of work, but diffuses in all spheres of experiences; namely, parenthood and marriage.

Normative Fields of Career and Work Ethics: Critique of New Economy and Its Personal "Costs"

Eventually, the career ideology appeared as one of the normative fields to which the interviewees referred. Here, however, it is approached critically, if not subverted by Timo in the light of the Finnish conjuncture.

CASE STUDY: TIMO

Back then when I started my career I was doing mechanical work. Then I got a design position. The biggest change was from designer to manager, since I started having meetings [with] foreigners, for a, let's say, farm boy turned designer, international projects abroad and in Finland. It opened the playing field . . . it blew it wide open, with so many points of contact and me being responsible for them. It was just a dozen people or so at its smallest, when we were starting out, it was in financial difficulties and we made it profitable.

Later on, I became a technology director and I had more people working under me too. Even though there was pressure and demands, but because we were a team, we all helped each other. We didn't have to compete with each other for anything inside the company. And then these new owners entered the picture, the owners at the time sold parts of the company to venture capitalists, and we started getting personal bonuses . . . with the idea that if someone succeeds, someone else has failed. In a few years it started changing drastically for the worse. I began to have a lot of pressure as a manager. For example, I had to start smoking my former good friends . . . workmates, out of the company. The workload sort of kept growing and growing, the new owners sort of started maximizing our contribution without giving any more resources. So, it started getting pretty taxing, mentally and otherwise. Then there was the problem that I got my first child, the venture capitalist or the new owner of the company had thought that, since we were around forty, our kids would be a little older . . . we could focus on work more . . . whereas I had my kids 10 years later than normal and couldn't, at that point, focus so much on work. And then my health started failing a little, too, that wouldn't let me travel . . . and, well, you know . . . in a way, I couldn't keep up with the increasing demands in that company. My, sort of capacity had reached its limits in the mid-2000s. Yes, so then I was fired in the first decade of the 2000s. The new owners sort of cleaned out the older employees and kicked me out while they were at it and appointed someone younger to my job. I think that I was a scapegoat for those others as well . . . the rest of management couldn't really meet the investor's demands. I think that, behind the scenes, they were playing a game that I wasn't completely involved in. I worked at a 150% at my own job . . . they played me out. What's that game, the weakest link, there's one chair too few and they see who will be left without. I've been unemployed since then, at home . . . up until today. I think it's been five or six years now. I've had hobbies and spent time with the kids . . . been this stay-at-home dad for this time.

In his interview, Timo makes sense of unemployment as a rupture of his "fantastic" career, linking his present situation to the past experiences and to future scenarios. In his meaning making, Timo moves in and out the settings of his previous organization and its changes (from a small firm to a profitable global business) and his current "stay-at-home" situation. In the setting of the previous organization, Timo encounters his career from a position of an expert devoted to personal career development and responsible management of teamwork. Organizational changes (parts of the company being sold to venture capitalists) signify the end of Timo's experience of solidarity in the workplace. The new company owner starts to take the most of the employees without adding resources. Timo performs his maximum capacity, simultaneously struggling with his health and

with reconciliation of work and family. Getting fired results from increasing competitiveness in the line of work and entails emotional experiences of injustice; Timo feels that he was "played out" and treated as "a scapegoat" because he couldn't meet the company's increasing expectations due to his health, age, and family situation that diverges from the normative timetable of the life course.

Timo's sensemaking in the previous organizational setting gets its meaning from the normative field of the career-ideology. While evaluating his successful career from his new position of unemployed, Timo calls upon an alternative normative field that we can call "work ethics." Within this field, Timo responds to changing standards and norms of working life and identifies where he is in time and space in terms of his own career and general labor market developments. Timo takes a critical stance towards the Schumpeterian world of the New Economy and its personal consequences, where people have to cope with flexibility and tighter performance requirements that are seemingly presenting new opportunities of self-fulfillment to workers, but at the same time creating new forms of oppression ultimately undermining employees' emotional and psychological well-being (Sennett, 1999). The new modes of organization in the New Economy are affecting "character" as expressed by mutual loyalties and commitments, and ultimately lead to the decline of values and personal traits that are desirable in society (Sennett, 1999). Timo's sensemaking suggest that for him, working hard and dedication to work have lost their value and been replaced by the "cut-throat mentality" and "faked" performances; it is now acceptable to compromise on the quality of work, that is, go from where the fence is lowest when seeking for fast results.

> *Timo:* I was on this fast track, rather naive. I just barrelled along the fast track with a humble mind, not looking forward, like outwards, if I now went back to work, I'd definitely look at it from a different angle. I've also noticed that in today's work, there's this . . . you're not rewarded for actually doing your job well, you've got to fake it. Pretend to work while looking for the easy way out. You get ahead in your career, not by really doing your job well, but by making it look good . . . so working life as a whole, it's become this fake act. You know, the American way versus the Finnish. Like, really doing things and to a high standard, that's sort of out of fashion, so I would definitely adapt myself to that in the future.

Although Timo doesn't question the career as an ideology and appreciates his working history and a "nice CV," he revises his past career investments and his past self, according to the demands of new situation, that is, "long-term unemployment." Unemployment as a rupture threatens to undermine his previous career efforts, diminishes the value of his degree, and constrains future perspectives. Timo blames his past self for being naïve for putting so many efforts on doing his work carefully and being unable to predict what is to come within the industry. Developmental transition in a sense of identity transformation cannot be identified from Timo's sensemaking. However, Timo's change from career-oriented businessman to family-oriented father represents a significant transition—"a complete U-turn"—in his life course.

> *Timo:* After I lost my job, I've spent a lot of time with the kids, been more present. I stopped being career-oriented and became family-oriented . . . that was a complete U-turn, I tell you. Right now, family comes first. I wish that I could still participate in working life somehow. Since I've still got 15 years to go before retirement, but I haven't come up with anything concrete yet. Naturally, it took some time to reject the old history, because I had a fantastic career. But then, getting fired torpedoed that pretty good. I do have a good, nice CV and experience. But it's become meaningless because the whole industry has vanished from Finland. And there haven't been any new jobs in the industry. My degree, it's practically toilet paper at the moment. It's completely meaningless. I couldn't predict that the whole industry would collapse, so totally.

Despite criticism toward his past career behavior, Timo stresses that "what happens to individuals largely depends on the social circumstance. Circumstances out of your control have a tremendous impact on your life."

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Common to the cases illustrated in our analysis is that work and education are seen by the interviewed persons as imperatives, as much psychological as economic. The interviewees' meaning making reflects the notion that work is no longer an obligation imposed upon individuals, nor an activity only undertaken for instrumental reasons; work itself is—or should be—a means of self-fulfillment and a pathway to individual self-actualization (Rose, 1992). Regardless of the origins of work-related ruptures, men and women position themselves in time and space in a way that puts them in a position to evaluate positively or negatively their experiences and their selves in relation to career as a normative semiotic field. People adopt and challenge career as an ideology through different kinds of interpretative fields—social mobility and utilization of one's talents, an autonomous women, therapy culture, and work ethics. Thus, working life courses can be understood as positioning movements within and between sociocultural normative fields. Different

resources, such as active labor market programs, institutional guidance, personal relationships in work and family spheres, as well as an ability to create links between different domains of life course, are used by people and may lead to developmental transitions, that is, new identity positions, new skills, and new understanding, to be manifested in future work paths.

As a whole, our chapter contributes to various debates and domains of inquiry. In effect, we have proposed a sociocultural psychology of the life course, with two theoretical innovations: the notion of work path, and that of normative semiotic field. This allows us to contribute, on the one hand, to studies in work, organizational and vocational psychology, by questioning the normativity of working life, relocating it within the life course, and disentangling objective, structural, and normative aspects of work, from their experiential, phenomenological interpretations by people. On the other hand, it contributes to sociocultural psychology, not only by pursuing an analysis of transition processes and their outcomes, but also by bringing in a specific analysis of one of the levels by which the sociocultural world guides the mind—here, what we have called "normative fields" and that pertain to socioeconomic realities that dominate our cultural worlds. This both allows us to pursue an exploration on the resources used by people to make sense of their lives (Gillespie & Zittoun, 2010), and to advance our understanding of the processes by which institutions shape lives (Zittoun, 2016c, 2016b).

The proposed reading may have wider implications in research and intervention, by calling up our attention to the semiotic normative fields that guide people's life courses; as these reflect pervasive values, and are deeply embedded in discourses, practices, organization practices, and institutional structures, these may remain at the periphery of our consciousness. Calling our attention on them, inviting us to reflect on these, might allow further distancing, and open new ways for imagining the role and place of work in our lives.

NOTES

1. A Schumpeterian competition state paradigm views state and society in terms of market efficiency. Markets are seen the most efficient and just way of organizing society, and the goal is to gain national competitiveness by stimulating technological innovation and entrepreneurship (Kantola & Kananen, 2013).
2. In February 2017 the unemployment rate was 9,2 % (10,1 % males and 8,2% females). Proportion of part-time employed persons in all employed persons aged 15-74 was 16,9% (12,1% males and 21,8 % females), (Statistics Finland, 2018).
3. We illustrate this method by identifying the elements of the narrative in example 1 (Risto's story).
4. Stories that we represent are summaries of broader narratives and therefore constructed by researchers. Thus, some sentences that are not essential in terms of our interpretations of the interviewees' meaning making have been removed from summarized stories.

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CHAPTER 9

WORK AND GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY

The Case of the Male Accompanying Spouses[1]

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Work and the search for a better livelihood are usually considered amongst the main drivers of human mobility. In times of globalization, work has become more global in nature, and involves more and more the transnational migration flows of many people. A great variety of international organizations, multinational corporations, and institutions in academia, science and medical fields, among others, now attracts a growing number of professional workers on a global scale. Some of these workers engage in repeated moves across countries, either for personal choice or against their will, for their career trajectories, or for the duration of their work contracts. At times, these people move with their families and, as a result, their partners can decide to remake work on-the-move, or stop working and take care of family duties. Accompanying the partner in international mobility has long been associated with the image of a "trailing" and nonworking "wife"

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